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PIONEER DAYS

at

Big Sandy, Montana

by

Lou Lawrence



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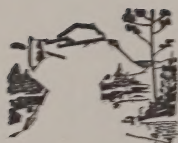
Big Sandy, Montana

by

Lou Lawrence



3035 AVENUE G VICTOR, CO. MONT.
OF
THE SOUTHWESTERN



A Mountaineer Publication
Printed at Big Sandy, Montana, U. S. A.

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Dedicated to

The cattlemen and homesteaders who were tough enough
and stubborn enough to stick it out and conquer this
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AUTHOR'S NOTE

This book is based on facts, as we have been able to find them -- too much of the early history of this area has been lost forever.

We have tried to present a picture of the area, the events and the problems during the cattle and homestead days.

The homesteader or "sod buster" played an important part in opening up, settling and developing this area.

It was a great frontier while it lasted. True all the settlers that came out weren't farmers and never would have made farmers; but they brought their hopes, their dreams, their ambitions, their trades, and their cultures, to this raw land; and left their mark on it. They helped to build the churches, the schools, the town, and the community.

Their mistakes, their heartbreaks and their failures led to improved methods of farming -- larger units, mechanized, summer fallowing and strip cropping; techniques that led to successful farming in this area.

The boarded up homestead shack, the derelict privy, the crumbling cabins, and the dusty, weed grown trails are disappeared; but may the memories of the good years for the homesteader remain, and may their contributions to the community be remembered.

Lou Lawence



Big Sandy, Montana, was named after Big Sandy Creek. There are several versions as to how Big Sandy Creek was named. In the early days the Blackfeet called it Ahmi Sapsiko or "Sandy Up". Old maps list it as "Sand Creek". The name was changed to "Big Sandy" before the present town came into existence.

One version, handed down through the years, of how Big Sandy got its name is that it was dervied from "Big Sandy" Lane, a muleskinner out of Fort Benton, who came one day to the flooded creek near the present town and bewailed his luck, the weather, and the inability of his team of mules to make the crossing, so fluently that the creek dried up and he crossed on dry land.

Lewis and Clark passed through this area along the Missouri River in 1805 and again in 1806 on their return trip. Their diaries describe numerous landmarks that have changed very little since 1806, particularly in the more rugged badlands area and the White Rocks area.

Two fur trading posts were established at the mouth of the Judith River during the fur trading period -- Fort Chardon north of the Missouri and Fort Clagget on the south shore, the latter at one time operated by "Diamond R" Brown.

In the fall of 1866 a battalion of the 13th Infantry, under Major Clinton, established Camp Cooke at the mouth of the Judith River as an Army Post. It was described as situated upon sage bottoms, saturated with alkali and overrun with rats. Camp Cooke survived until the spring of 1870 when it was abandoned and the troops removed. Today, evidence of this old Post can still be found and enjoyed by students of history.

Northcentral Montana was one of the last areas in United States to be settled due to the dry climate and severe winters and the ferocity of the Indian tribes.

The Great Plains became the last stronghold of the Indians who were being constantly pushed back by land hungry settlers. The Sioux tribes were resisting settlement northward from the Oregon Trail and the Blackfeet and related tribes resisted settlers along the upper Missouri.

In 1855 Isaac Stevens, at a gathering of the tribes at the mouth of the Judith River, negotiated a treaty with the Blackfeet, Piegans, Gros Ventre and Assiniboine setting aside as Indian Reservation all the land east of the Sun River, north of the Missouri River, and south of the Missouri River east of the Musselshell. Other areas in Montana and Wyoming were set aside as reservations and the land south of the Missouri and west of the Musselshell was set aside as a hunting area for the Blackfeet.

The movement of settlers into Montana from the east was brought to a standstill and the area belonged to the Indians. In 1876 Custer and the 7th Cavalry was wiped out on the Little Big Horn and the Army took the field with a campaign of reprisals. The area of Indian opposition on a large scale was brought to an end in the Battle of the Bear Paws when Chief Joseph and his Nez Perces surrendered after a four day battle with the reactivated 7th Cavalry, the 2nd Cavalry and the 5th Infantry.

Treaties were made to be broken, and the Indians, the best horsemen in the world, continually outmanuvered the cavalry; but the elimination of the buffalo heralded the end of the old way of life for the Indian. In 1870 an established six million buffalo roamed the plains of central and eastern Montana, furnishing the basis for the Indian economy, by 1883 they had been almost completely annihilated by the buffalo hunters. The last buffalo in the Bear Paws was reported killed on Eagle Creek in 1889.

Fort Assiniboine, built in 1879, south of Havre, to guard the northern ramparts of Montana Indian Territory, played its part in the beginning of Big Sandy. McNamara and Marlow, who were freighting supplies brought up the

Missouri by steamboat; had a choice of three routes from the river to the Fort. Depending on the water level of the Missouri, supplies were unloaded at Fort Benton, Coal Banks (4 miles below the present town of Virgelle), or at Cow Island. At the junction of the trails, near a supply of water, a warehouse was built, eventually bringing the present town of Big Sandy into existence.

In 1886 a man named Swanson opened Big Sandy's first commercial establishment, an old tent converted into a saloon.

In 1886 the famous old Log Cabin saloon was built, located near the present site of Pep's Place. Many stories and legends have been passed down about the events that transpired within the walls of that old saloon.

Shortly after this the back part of Marlow's house was built by a man named Morrow.

In 1887 the opening of the territory north of the Missouri River to cattle and the coming of the railroad marked the beginning of the real development of Big Sandy.

With the elimination of the buffalo and control of the Indians cattle were moved into the Judith Basin area and by 1885 the range land south of the Missouri was covered with cattle and already being overgrazed. The Missouri breaks became an early hideout for outlaws and cattle rustlers. Stuart's Stranglers put an end to their activities by hanging a number of them and shooting a few more -- without going through the bother or expense of a trial.

After the hard winter of 1886-87 cattlemen sought new grazing lands for their herds, so they moved across the Missouri to the choice grass growing on the reservations and a new treaty was made with the Gros Ventre. As soon as the big Indian reservation north of the Marias and the Missouri was opened cattle litterly exploded onto the range.

This was the last of the open range with its free grass, and the area around the Judith Crossing, southeast of Big Sandy, was jammed with herds waiting to cross. Cattle from the Judith district, Texas trail herds, and sheep flowed in, and the boom was on.

In 1866 construction of Hill's St. Paul, Minneapolis and

Manitoba Railway (later the Great Northern) had been stopped five miles west of Minot pending completion of negotiation with the federal government.

Early in 1887 the right was secured to cross Indian and Military reservations and other public domain in western North Dakota and Montana.

Then came a record achievement. Realizing the necessity of speed, the contractors threw tremendous man and horsepower into the history making project of laying 550 miles of track before winter.

Track laying started April 2, 1887, the contractor's gang numbered nearly 9,000 men and 7,000 horses.

By the middle of September, 1887, most of these 9,000 men were camped along Big Sandy Creek and the 7,000 horses were feeding along the Big Sandy hay flats.

A source of water, the ever present problem in a semi-arid country, determined where the water tank and depot should be located, one mile north of the present town. This became a name on the railroad map, loading pens were constructed, and Big Sandy was officially in existence.

A Mrs. Flaherty, wife of the first section foreman, left some written history of Big Sandy in the fall and winter of 1887.

At that time Big Sandy consisted of the McNamara and Marlow warehouse, an old box car for a depot, a box car for a section foreman's house, and nine saloons.

The saloons, with the exception of the Log Cabin Saloon, were mostly tents with wooden floors or small shacks. They were all located on or near the present Main Street, although they frequently changed their location. A popular form of amusement that year, perhaps in retaliation because the bartender hadn't "set them up" often enough, was to wait until everyone had gone to bed and then hitch a team of horses to one of the flimsy structures and haul it several miles out on the prairie.

This pastime had a violent reaction one night when, unable to obtain horses, they hooked on a pair of mules and the mules promptly proceeded to kick one wall in, destroying most of the liquid refreshments.

Big Sandy was a rip-roaring town in '87. Construction workers, section hands, cowboys and Indians, all depending on nine saloons to provide the only entertainment.

Chivalry was very much alive that year. Mrs. Flaherty was the only white women in Big Sandy at that time and a unique devise was invented to protect her from being annoyed by cowboys and section hands who may have indulged a little too much. All the containers that could be borrowed, begged or stolen, were filled with cactus plants and arranged around her box car home in such a way that it took a clear eye and steady legs to negotiate the path to the door.

This devise worked beautifully until one night, one of the section hands, slightly under the influence, blundered into the recently transplanted cactus field. The harder he tried to get out the more plants he floundered into and the louder he yelled, until the entire community was aroused and most of the town came running to see what had happened.

In 1887 the first hotel, located back of the present Big Store, was built by Pat McDonald. It later became McNamara and Marlow's "mess house".

In it's second year of existance, after the coming of the railroad, Big Sandy was already becoming a busy commercial point for shipping cattle and wool and was on its way toward becoming one of Montana's big stock shipping centers.

More and more cattle and sheep were being moved onto the open range. Soon a continuous line of cattle was being trailed in to this shipping point to be shipped to eastern markets. Cattle were trailed in from as far away as Judith Gap and the Sweetgrass Hills to be loaded at Big Sandy.

In 1888 a store was built by Broadwater, McCullen and Co., near the railroad tracks and Main St., and later sold to McNamara and Marlow.

In 1889 the Spokane Hotel, located near where the Vet's Club is now, was build by Paul Handely.

For 24 years, until the coming of the homesteader, Big Sandy was exclusively "cow town". Wooden sidewalks re-

sounded to the jangle of cowboy's spurs and the clang of glasses was heard in the inevitable saloon. Big Sandy was the headquarters for 80 to 90 riders and gamblers and women of easy virtue helped to relieve the cowboys of their hard earned cash when they came in to "paint the town red". Saddle horses, buckboards, wagons, hitch racks, chaps, high heeled boots, and six guns were everyday sights. "Shooting up the town" was not an uncommon occurrence and provided one form of amusement.

In 1889 8,000 head of cattle, 10,000 head of sheep and over 500,000 pounds of wool were shipped out of Big Sandy.

In 1891 Oscar Stevens of Ubet drove 10,000 sheep to Big Sandy for shearing, letting the woolies transport their own wool to the railhead.

In 1893 314 cars of cattle and 64 cars of sheep were loaded here and Big Sandy was known as one of Montana's big stock shipping centers.

In 1894 "Old Dad" Freeze turned part of his homestead into a townsite. Before the townsite was opened there was already a number of buildings on it. This was the original townsite of Big Sandy.

The last of the open range attracted men famous in Montana history. Charles Russell, Montana's famous cowboy artist, worked from 1889-1892 for various outfits north of the Missouri around Big Sandy and Chinook. Kid Curry, desperado from the Little Rockies, was a frequent visitor, as his signature on the register of the old Spokane hotel showed. Gunmen from the Johnson County War in Wyoming drifted north of the Missouri. Cavalry troops from Fort Assiniboine patrolled through Big Sandy and camped overnight here.

Ranches were started in the Bear Paw Mountains and southeast of Big Sandy along the streams and water holes. Lonesome Prairie, west of Big Sandy, remained uninhabited except for herds of cattle roaming the open range.

Until the homesteaders started to flock in about 1911 there were no fences, no telephones, no power lines to mar the landscape as far as the eye could see.

Horses furnished the only transportation across the far

flung distances -- the saddle horse, the horse and buggy, the freighters, and the horses and wagon furnished the transportation for both people and material. Run aways and unruly brones took their toll of humans, hurting some and killing a few.

Both cattle and sheep used the open range and, surprisingly, very little friction developed between the cattlemen and the sheepmen, and their relationship was generally amicable. Some friction did develop between some of the cattle outfits, and a few riders with reputations as gunmen were imported, but it never got out of hand. Some gunfights and killings did take place, but were the results of personal greivances between individuals.

The annual round-up was a community project, each rancher furnishing his share of cowboys and horses, depending on how many cattle he ran; and the round-ups were operated as part of the Bear Paw Pool.

Typical of the cowboys who worked and lived in the Big Sandy area during it's cowtown days. Back row, left to right, George Hicks, Moses C. Tingley, George Dickson; front row, left to right, Percy Howe and B. M. Sinclair (the original Fiddle Back Kid). The Tingleys were among the first cattle outfits in the area.

Their appearance is quite different from today's two-gun movie and TV cowboys; shoulder holsters and chap pockets were as popular as gunbelts to pack their guns.





The reason for Big Sandy's existence until 1911 -- the stockyard. It was located where Montana Enterprise is now. The tall building in the center was the Shamrock Hotel and the large building at right center was the Spokane Hotel. The economy of the entire community depended on the number of cattle shipped out from this stockyard each fall, and the number of pounds of wool sold.

Cattle was the financial stability of the area although a large number of sheep was raised on homesteaded land and open range. From 1888 to 1897 there was a decline in the price of wool and almost no market for mutton, while there was a raise in the price of beef.

Perhaps one of reasons for the large number of sheep then was the lower cost of getting into the sheep business. It was possible to purchase sheep on shares or rent a band of sheep. A band of sheep could be rented for one-half the wool and at the end of three years get one-half the increase plus what was left of the original band, or pay an annual rental of one dollar per head and return the original number in three years.



Main street of Big Sandy, wide, dusty and not overly populated, during it's day as a cowtown. In the foreground are the railroad tracks. Left is the old McNamara and Marlow Store, which furnished the variety of merchandise needed by the ranchers in the area. Further down the street was the Log Cabin Saloon, the center of entertainment for most of the male population. To the right, out of the picture, was the Spokane Hotel.

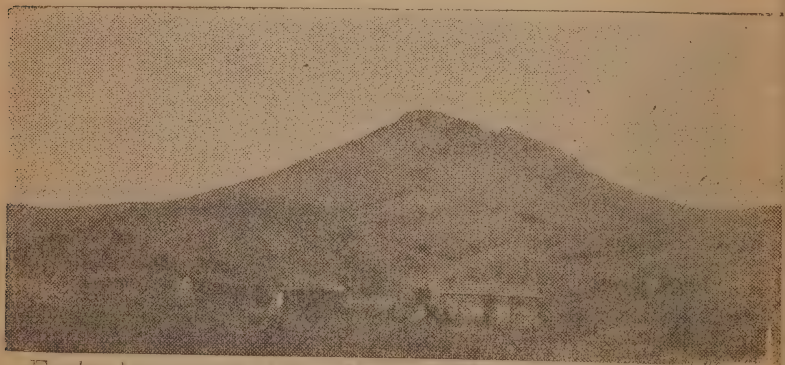
Most of the year the town remained fairly quiet, serving as a trading center. During the shipping period it livened up considerably. Trail herds were brought in, cattle were sold and loaded, ranchers bought their winter supply of staples, ranch women came in to do their fall shopping, and cowboys got a taste of town life after months on the range.

Cowboys coming in with the herds usually found themselves in town with several months wages in their pockets and an urge to spend it. Entertainment was limited in the little cowtown after the edge had been taken off their thirst, although out-of-town gamblers and women moved in during the shipping season to help the cowboys spend their wages.

Occasionally tents were set up near the stockyards to make it easier for the cowboys to find their entertainment.



A very early picture taken in front of the McNamara and Marlow Store. The majority of the people in the photograph appear to be Indians. This must have been a festive occasion of some kind as everyone appears to be dressed in their best.



Early day ranch at the foot of Mount Centennial. The foothills and mountains were settled as early as 1889, especially along the streams. Although cattle roamed on open range, headquarter ranches were maintained at permanent locations.



An early picture of the Tingley riders. They were among the first to move cattle into this area. Third from the left in the photo is Dave Tingley, fifth from the left is Oliver Tingley, sixth Mose Tingley, seventh H. S. Tingley, and eight the Fiddle Back Kid.

Robert and Clifford Tingley originally came to Montana in the early '60s from Cheyenne, Wyoming, driving a bunch of cattle.

The Robert Tingleys then moved to 23 Mile Springs where they ran a road ranch, an overnight stop on the Fort Benton - Helena road until 1868. During an Indian uprising at that time their horses were stolen and the house set on fire. Mr. and Mrs. Tingley managed to escape, making the trip to Fort Benton on foot, carrying their oldest child.

For a number of years they ran cattle near where the City of Great Falls is now, then ran a butcher shop at Fort Benton for a while supplying meat for steamboats and taking care of government contracts for beef at Fort Benton, Fort Keogh, Fort Custer, Tongue River and other points.

About 1881 they bought the J. L. Perkins herd of cattle and trailed them into the Big Sandy area, where they built the first house in the vicinity. At one time they were rated as one of the largest individual stock holders in the state.



The old Pioneer Livery, built and operated by Robert S. Tingley. A livery stable was an essential part of every community during the "horse and buggy" days. The stable furnished shelter and feed for the animals of the travelers while they were in town. The stable offered a rental service to those who wished to rent a saddle horse, team and buggy, or team and wagon. The stable could also furnish a vehicle and driver for transportation or freight to any point in the area. They also brought, sold and traded horses.

After mail routes were established a stage was operated to Judith three times a week and Warrick twice a week. The fare was \$2.50 to either place for each passenger.

The Pioneer Livery was later converted into a show hall and dance hall. A second story was added and the upstairs became a dance hall and the first floor was converted into the Tingley Opera House.

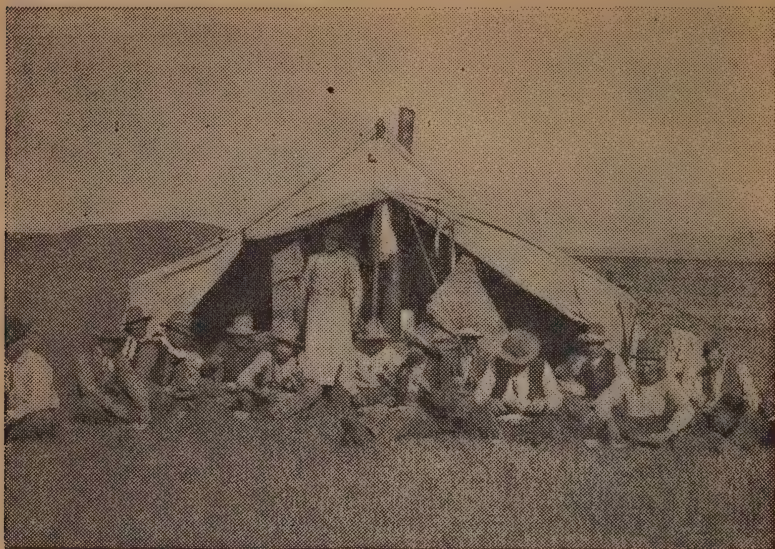
There were no movies, radio or TV; and traveling road shows and medicine shows furnished the only outside entertainment to a cowtown community.



Harry Green, one of the old time top hands, putting on a riding exhibition years ago. The location is about where Farmers Union Elevator is now. In the background is the Great Northern freight house, among the first buildings in Big Sandy.

Harry Green, and his brother, Larry Green, were two of the top riders in Montana. Harry Green rode some of the toughest horses in the country during his riding career. No 4th of July or other outdoor celebration was complete without one of the Green boys pitting their skill against the wildest horse they could find in the area.

Horse racing was another popular sport in the early days. Race horses were raised and trained in this area, full time jockeys and trainers were employed, and considerable money changed hands on the outcome of the races. The Tingley stable of horses took their share of purses on various tracks in the country. Rivalry between various communities developed over races, and a large segment of the betting fraternity would follow their favorite horses, and return home flush or broke, depending on how well their horses ran.



A typical round-up camp during the days of the open range. This camp was located east of Big Sandy. The work was hard, the days were long, and a pause at the chuck tent was a welcome break for the hands.

During the days of the open range, with no fences as far as the eye could see, cattle roamed free, sometimes miles from the headquarters ranch.

Round-up crews would start from one end of a large area and work through to the other, gathering the cattle for branding, cutting them out in groups for the various owners, and sorting them for shipping. Each rancher furnished his share of the cost, including hands and horses. Each cowboy furnished his own bedroll and mostly slept out under the stars, although occasionally tents were set up to keep out the elements.

The climax of the round-up was the trail herd moving in to the Big Sandy stock yard, to be loaded on Great Northern stock cars and shipped to eastern markets.

This was the point at which the rancher determined what his financial condition was after a year's work.



Some of the first buildings constructed in the Big Sandy area were crude, building material was hard to get, and the first settlers used what they could obtain in the immediate vicinity.

Logs were cut in the Bear Paws, along the Missouri, and in some cases along the creeks. Most of the wood for the stoves and logs for construction were taken from the Bear Paws. Old maps show a wagon trail marked "Wood Road to Big Sandy", extending from the south side of the mountains and junctioning with the Warrick and Fort Clagget roads near th Whitcraft Ranch.



Two views of the famous old Log Cabin Saloon. This was the favorite gathering place for cowboys in the area. The building in the right background was the barber shop.



The McNamara and Marlow families at the Eagle Creek ranch. This picture was taken before the Marlow wing was built on to the house.

The firm of McNamara and Marlow played a very large part in the growth and development of this area through their extensive ranching operations, merchandise, lumber and implement business, and banking service.

Cornelius J. McNamara was born at Van Haven, Vermont April 2, 1853. He came to Montana in 1879, where he was post trader at Fort McGinnis, northeast of Lewistown.

He got the contract to haul all the brick for the building of Fort Assiniboine, south of Havre. The brick was delivered by river boat to Coal Banks, just down river from Virgelle. This site was particularly valuable because of the coal deposits located there, and one freighting road served to deliver both fuel and supplies brought up the river.

McNamara's freight depot at Big Sandy served as headquarters for other operations, and in addition to delivering materials for building Fort Assiniboine, he freighted many loads of merchandise, with eight horse teams, to Fort McGinnis.

The firm went into the cattle business and built up the largest ranch in the Bear Paw Mountains. In 1888 or '89 they purchased the store in Big Sandy and later built the "Big Store" when more settlers came in.

He married Agnes Miltz, daughter of Jacob and Elizabeth Miltz January 10, 1900, and they built and made their home at the Eagle Creek ranch in the Bear Paw Mountains.

The Miltz family came to Montana in 1889 from Detroit, Michigan and settled on Eagle Creek. Ferdinand Kaiser helped Mr. Miltz build a log cabin home on Eagle Creek, which was the first in that area. The cabin was painted white and became known as "The White House" by the old timers.

Mr. Miltz built and furnished a schoolhouse in 1892. The first scholars were the Miltz children, Eddie and Florence Kaiser and Francis Hilbig. Four months of the year the children attended this school and the other four months they attended the Henry Lehfeldt School, 30 miles from the Miltz home.



An early photo of the McNamara and Marlow horse herd, carrying the Flying A brand.

Recognizing the need for a banking service in an area of large cattle and sheep ranches a bank was organized. In March, 1910 C. J. McNamara, Walter Brown, V. F. Bankenbaker, S. A. Miller, and E. B. Newhall were named the original directors of the new bank, and Mr. McNamara was made president of Northern Montana State Bank.

Cornelius McNamara was a prominent figure in north-central Montana affairs and was a community leader in the Big Sandy area.

The Kaiser family also came into the mountains in 1887 and Herman Osterman moved into the southeast country in the 80s.

Old maps list a number of settlers in this area before 1896, although some names are impossible to read and have to be omitted from this report.

Just east of Big Sandy in 1896 were Marlows, Tingleys, Haydens, Battrams, Murrays, Beckers, Neil McMillan, Whitcrafts, Countrymans, Gains and Coleson.



A sheep shearing camp on the McNamara and Marlow ranch, located at the Sheep Sheds, above the Whitcraft. Standing third from the left, with hat, is Bill Krumsick.

Further east on the present Warrick road were Frances Barfeld, Haighlers, Godfreys (the maps also list a Godfrey Creek in this area), Hancocks, Ryans and Morres. The map shows the formation just past the Eagle Creek ranch was called Pipe Organs and also shows a school about a mile further on.

Out the Cow Island Trail we find Smiths, Kuppets, Williamsons, Siefert, Hilbigs, Weiderholtz. These maps show the Big Sandy - Warrick crossing near Lower Dog Creek and a Fort Claggett to Birch Creek road in the same area. A fair size lake bed is shown about 5 miles below the Dog Creek Crossing.

On the present Coal Mine Road, then marked wagon road to Big Sandy, were Nolaris, Macks, Gorma, Colesons, Gains, Frances Demars, Squires, J. Goin, and the Fort Assiniboine Military Reservation.

Out along the Judith road the following early day settlers are listed: Grants, Carters, Lehfeldts, Williams, Williamsons, Melly, Frayoms, McNeills, Ostermans, John Lehfeldt (the Claggett to Big Sandy and Claggett to Birch Creek road branched at Chip Coulee), Lehfeldts, Bakers, and Todds.

The area toward Virgelle was sparsely settled, with nothing west of the railroad tracks. The only names on the map are Clarks, Verona siding, Carters, and Murrays. The Coal Banks, Big Sandy and Fort Benton roads junctioned about 2 miles north of Virgelle.



For the first 23 years of its existance Big Sandy remain-exclusively "cowtown". Then a change started to take place, the homesteader was on the move; first a trickle, then a stream, and finally a flood.

Some homesteads had been filed on prior to 1910, mostly in the mountains and along the streams. But the real migration of homesteaders into this territory began in 1911.

In 1909 it was still largely open range and cattle country. The west prairie was still virgin grass, dotted with cattle. The only roads in existance on Lonesome Prairie at that time was a trail winding in from Brinkman to Big Sandy and the old Fort Benton to Fort Assinniboine stage road that crossed the prairie northwest of Big Sandy.

The Chouteau County census for 1909 listed the following 59 adults in the Big Sandy area, mostly connected with cattle and sheep:

Hans Anderson, farmer, located up against Centennial; Robert F. Baker, farmer, southeast of Centennial; Peter C. Carter, well driller, located where the present football field is; Nelse Christenson, near Centennial; Alexander Christie, the district school teacher; James Conley, cattle, located southeast of Big Sandy; Frank E. Countryman, cattle, present Berlinger place; Robert E. Cowan, east of Haaland's; Frank DeMars, farmer, near Sheehy's; Malcolm Deniston, farmer, in the coal mine area; J. D. English,

farmer, back of Centennial; Mrs. E. A. Goin, farmer, near McConkey ranch; Joseph Gontier, cattle and horses, near the Green ranch; Nelse Jacobson, farmer, Centennial; G. C. Ihmsen, sheep, present Ihmsen well; Henry Jappe, sheep, Wilbur Lanning place; C. I. Jensen, depot agent; J. M. Jorgensen, farmer near Sheehy's; George M. Keller, Keller ranch; Lucy Kilpatrick, near Hettrick place; Joseph Kohler, cattle; Johannes Lehfeldt, hotel and livery; John McClelland, on Eagle Creek; Neil McMillan, farmer, above Eagle Creek; McNamara and Marlow, general merchandise, cattle and horses; C. C. Mack, coal mine, sheep and cattle; J. H. Martin, farmer, near Trunk place; Samuel Miller, cattle; Elizabeth Miltz and Jacob Miltz, farmer, above Eagle Creek; R. W. Mack, sheep, on the Cowan place; Edward Moes, Sibra place; James Moore, farmer, back of Centennial; H. I. Mudd and Mrs. Lizzie Mudd, Mudd addition to Big Sandy; Eleanor Murtaugh; Edgar Newhall, postmaster; Emil Nielson, farmer; Jonas Nyggard, laborer; Louis Olson, laborer; Herman Osterman, sheep, Osterman ranch; Henry Pump, clerk; W. A. Ragan, east of Drakes; Issac M. Roger, stock inspector, Chauvet place; Fred Runyan, unclassified; Paul Schwartz, sheep, above the Witcraft; Hugh Sheehy, farmer; Mrs. Rose A. Sheehy, farmer; T. J. Sheehy, farmer; Wm. Simmons, saloon, Epaphroditus Smith, farmer; James Smith, sheep; W. B. Smith, sheep; J. T. Sneath; Martha J. Sneath; P. M. Sonksen, farmer and horses; Nickolas Sternberg, sheep; and Byron Ten Broeck, clerk.

Other settlements in the area were listed at Warrick, Judith and Leroy.

Grain raising started slowly in Northern Montana, although grain had been raised successfully in eastern North Dakota as early as 1870. Northern Montana was a long way from a market, freight rates were high, and there was no demand at that time for hard wheat.

Great Northern had a railroad crossing the area and needed more settlers and produce to keep their trains full. In 1909 the railroad proceeded to encourage more settlers by promoting this area on a large scale with advertising,

emphasizing the productivity of the soil, and de-emphasizing the severe winters and shortage of rainfall. Farm equipment companies, wholesale houses, merchants and bankers pushed the advantages of homesteading in Northern Montana and people from every walk of life and every profession headed west to try their resources and luck at dry land farming.

Through 1909 and 1910 homesteaders were trickling in, but in 1911 they started to flock in and Big Sandy started to grow in proportion.

In 1910 Northern Montana State Bank opened its doors for business and Havre was no longer considered the banking point for this area.

March 2, 1911 the first issue of the Bear Paw Mountaineer was published and Big Sandy had a newspaper to record its history. The first Commercial Club was organized the 16th of March and by April 10th a baseball team had been organized. March 30th a stage line was started from Big Sandy to Judith and April 6th a post office was opened at Kenilworth. During April 70 wolf hides were brought in from the mountains and in May the annual horse round-up started.

Articles concerning the Big Sandy area began to appear in eastern newspapers, periodicals, and magazines. The following article received wide-spread circulation in the May issue of the magazine, "Marvelous Montana":

"Few, if any, of the new Montana towns occupy a more favorable spot than does Big Sandy. Located in the center of a beautiful area known as the Lake Basin country at the foot of the Bear Paw Mountains with broad stretches of what are known as the Paradise Prairies to the west, in the heart of the famous Blackfoot Reservation, which for years has held the enviable reputation of being Montana's finest stock-raising country, its future is most apparent.

Big Sandy, in reality, is not a new town. For years it has been recognized as a great shipping point for stockmen, and the history of the place, if written, would fill volumes of western story that would thrill as well as delight the reader of western stories. Over 6,000 sheep were sheared

at Big Sandy last year, a mark that will probably never be reached again, for the days of the free range have passed into history and the homeseekers shacks can now be seen as far as the eye can reach, and the plow, the seeder, and the harvester will mark a new epoch in this area's future.

Located on the Great Northern railway, midway between the cities of Fort Benton and Havre, with a wide territory from all sides to draw from, Big Sandy offers exceptional opportunities for the seekers of new business locations of nearly every kind. And for the homeseeker Uncle Sam still has a large number of choice pieces of land open for their selection, and the early comers will be the fortunate ones.

The soil in this section is a deep loam, dark brown in color, and in texture is something between a clay of considerable firmness and a sandy loam. A virgin soil, stored full of the rare qualities that make for the future tiller a sure reward, very retentive of the ample precipitation this section gets, which, since 1881, has averaged nine inches from the month of May until August, the season the growing vegetation requires it. The climate, also, is ideal, with an average of 130 days between killing frost in the spring and fall, giving ample maturing time for all growing grains.

Since the opening of this tract of land last spring over 700 entries have been recorded at the land office and one would have a hard time to find a single dissatisfied homesteader. A number of gas and steam plow rigs have been in this section and thousands of acres are being sown to spring grains. A considerable acreage of winter wheat was sown last fall and the beautiful carpet of green which now covers this acreage tells but one story of a rich reward this fall for the sower.

The water supply in the Big Sandy country is easily attainable from 14 to 40 feet, and is of the finest quality, and within six miles of town are inexhaustible coal fields, which supply fuel at a minimum cost. These items alone are of vast importance to the newcomer and appreciated by him.

Big Sandy has more than doubled in size the past year,

now has three lumber yards, the St. A. and Dak., Empire Lumber Co., and McNamara and Marlow; one hotel, the Spokane, owned and managed by C. B. VanAlstine; a bank, Northern Montana State Bank; two livery barns, R. S. Tingley, The Pioneer Livery, and Peter Sonksen; one general merchandise store, McNamara and Marlow, employing at least ten clerks; three saloons, a meat market, one restaurant, a harness shop, two barber shops, two blacksmith shops, a newspaper, two established real estate firms, a practicing physician.

Special attention is being paid to give the young the best possible educational advantages, and for holding religious services that those who desire may not miss the privileges

One has but to look over the vast country tributary to Big Sandy, sixty miles to the east and south, thirty miles to the west, that must make this it's trading point, to realize what the future has in store for the town, and to appreciate the exceptional business opportunities that await the man who is seeking a new location.

Big Sandy has a commercial club, with W. C. Coleman as secretary, who is always glad to receive and will promptly reply to inquires from all interested."

The above piece of propaganda is a typical example of the stories that appeared all over United States, and especially the mid-west, praising the virtues of this new country and tempting settlers to move in and live like kings in the wide-open spaces.

The publicity did tempt them. Jim Hill's railroad hauled more and more "immigrant cars", in which the homeseeker could pack his household goods, cattle, horses, and even his family; and have the car delivered to Big Sandy at a special low rate.

The country was being settled, the town grew, land was practically free, crops were assured, and everyone dreamed of prosperity and security.

Cattlemen recognized that the day of the open range was rapidly drawing to a close and tried to retain as much land as they could. Already established in the area they

had a choice of streams and springs, and both owners and cowboys filed on claims, usually with the understanding that when the cowboy proved up on his claim he would sell it to the cattle outfit he worked for. Fences began to appear and cattle were confined to more definite areas.

August 17, 1911, 700,000 pounds of wool was sold in Big Sandy and October 11th the PN trailed in, loaded and shipped 27 carloads of livestock.

In September a 20x34 schoolhouse was started on the prairie. In November Rev. Van Orsdel, the famous "Brother Van" was holding services in the Big Sandy schoolhouse and starting the groundwork for the building of a Methodist church. Catholic services were being held regularly at the Shamrock Hotel.

There was more and more talk about changing the name of Lonesome Lake and Lonesome Prairie to Paradise Prairie. Lonesome Lake had been called Imoyikini (Harry Lake) by the Blackfeet, after the grass around the lake that is fine and looks like hair. It was a favorite camping spot for various tribes, and there were a number of Indian skirmishes around the lake. Some of the first white in the country named it Lonesome Lake and the name, no doubt well founded, remained.

The desire to change the name to the more pleasant sounding Paradise Prairie was rapidly gaining supporters when the arguments and the name changing project was brought to an abrupt and decisive end by the following letter, which appeared in the Nov. 11, 1911 issue of the Bear Paw Mountaineer:

Hard Scrabble
Mont. Nov. 11, 1911

Mester Editor

Bear Paw Big Sandy.

Deer Sur

Ay ban seeing som ritings in your paper from a falar vot puts J. T. on botom of his ritings, som tim he rite poetry, now if J T tank ha ban only falar vat can rite for paper from dis praire he got noder gess koming for ay ban going

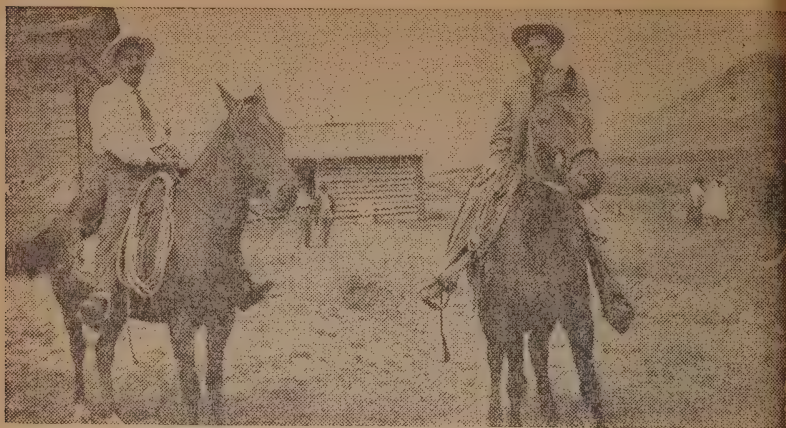
to do som riting ma self. J T cal his place paradise prairie, de old timer cal him Lonsom praire and J T damfol for trying to change nam. ay tank Lonsom praire ban best nam ay find purty dam Lonsom out har, twenty fem mil from som place in 10 x 14 shak vat yust got tar paper on out sid and dom ol kook stov vat dont draw and Termomtor tirty fem degre belo O. ay bat you tank he ban lonsom praire alrite if you ban out har dis last week. ay ban sitine up al nite mit stov to kep him varm you bet ay ban buisy to do tat much. ay tank dis stov ban straw burner he vont burn vood or Big Sandy koal. val der ban not much doing out har at Hard Scrabble he ban froz up to tite for much news but ay giv vat ay no, that dis praire ban von dam lonsom place.

Hard Scrabble Ole

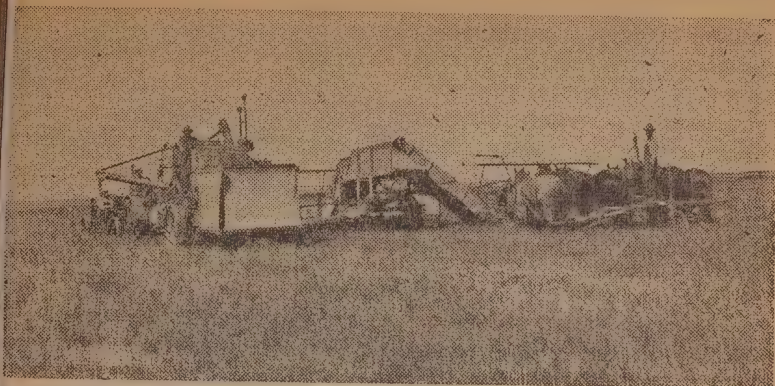
The violence of the old west hung on through the last part of 1911. There was some sheep and homesteader trouble in the north part of the county. In November a sheep and cattle war flared up on the reservation and on December 28 a gun fight took place at the P Cross cattle camp on Box Elder creek.



This was a posed picture taken at the old Hilbig ranch. Guns were commonplace and most everyone owned and knew how to use one.



Horses and mules were still the dependable power, on the range, on the homestead, and in town, for a number of years after the automobile and tractor appeared on the scene. Lack of adequate roads, undependable performance of the "gas buggy", and reluctance to change to something new, made the horse the preferred method of transportation. Surprisingly, but true, old records indicate that horses hurt, crippled and killed as many people as modern day traffic.



Headers in operation, motivated by horse power. Some steam and gasoline rigs were brought in during the early homestead days, but were used primarily for breaking the soil. Horses and manpower did most of the farming. The amount of ground a man and horses could work in one day was only a small fraction of what one man can do with modern equipment.

In the bottom picture, left to right, are Lester Sluggett, Al Johnson, Cal Johnson and Lossen Johnson.



One of the endless tasks connected with a homestead — hauling water with a water tank. The glowing promise of abundant good water never materialized and providing water, not only for animals, but humans as well, presented a continuous problem.



Bert Wright, one of the early day homesteaders, putting in a crop. He is working a combination, four horses on the right, four mules on the left.



The binder cut practically all the grain in this area in the early years of the homesteader. In 1911 two merchants were handling machinery. McNamara and Marlow sold McCormick binders, rakes, and mowers; and Johnson's Kenilworth Store handled a line of John Deere machinery, plows, gangs, sulkeys, gas and steam outfits, and wagons and buggies.

As early as 1911 several Big Sandy firms were specializing in land locating and relinquishments. They met the prospective homesteaders when they arrived, listed all the wonderful possibilities of the local land, took them out and showed them available tracts, and in a large percentage of cases induced them to settle in the Big Sandy area.

Most of the land was unsurveyed and a common method of determining the 160 acre tracts was to do the measuring with a wagon. A section line was found, a white rag was tied to a wheel, it was determined how many revolutions were required to mark off a rod, and the boundary of a new homestead was staked out. When surveyors did come in to plat out the land, it was surprising how many of the boundaries had been laid out quite accurate with the wheel and rag method.

As the year 1911 started to draw to a close and Christmas approached the theme, "Peace on Earth, Good Will to Men", was forgotten and the Army moved in to settle cattle and sheep trouble, which blazed up over the use of the Fort Assinniboine military reservation for grazing purposes.

The previous year a petition had been presented to Congress requesting permission to graze stock on the military reservation, claiming that the drouth of 1910 left the range in such poor condition that stock was starving to death and no water was obtainable.

Military authorities granted temporary permission and stock was moved in. Then sheepmen were accused of infringing on cattlemen's ground and both factions kept the telegraph wires hot to Washington reporting each other as not complying with the requirements of the grazing permits.

Military authorities cancelled all permits and Lieutenant Husington of the Fourteenth Infantry was sent from Fort Harrison to Fort Assinniboine to order all stock off the reservation.

Several sheep outfits refused to move after being ordered to and Lieutenant Husington and a detachment burned their camp wagons, and after several thousand dollars worth of hay stacked on the reservation on Box Elder Creek was burned out the reservation was cleared of stock.

Facilities were meager, the country was still sparsely settled, but the Yuletide season was remembered.

December 23 a Christmas program was held at the Prairie Home School, the first school on the prairie, under the direction of Miss Medene.

December 25th the children of the Big Sandy School had a Christmas tree and program. Gifts were exchanged and a Grand Ball was held after the program.

During 1912 the rush of settlers was on in earnest and stockmen and sheepmen were busy consolidating their land. Although large sections of land was converted to grain, stock remained the big economic factor in the mountains and along the Missouri River.

The slogan for 1912 was "Watch Big Sandy Grow".



January 11, 1912 the first band was organized to provide entertainment, furnish music for dances and picnics, and represent the community at out of town celebrations.

Ambitious plans were being made for the growth of the town. Work was started by Andy Elderman on the west side of the tracks to survey and lay out an additional townsite. Good wide streets were being laid out and residential and business lots were being platted. It was predicted that Big Sandy would be a town of 2,000 population by 1915.

The Scott and Coleman Land Co., a Big Sandy firm of land locaters, mailed out over 2500 twenty-four page folders, complete with pictures, to interested eastern settlers. In advertising the wonderful prospects of the local area they claimed to have already located around a thousand families in 1909 and 1910, with no dissatisfied settlers.

In contrast to the glowing picture of prosperity the following poem appeared in print.

ON A GOVERNMENT CLAIM

I'll write a few lines if only I can,
And tell you about my excellent plan.
You'll find me out here on a western plain,
Starving to death on a government claim.
Hurrah for this country, the land of the free!
Home of the grasshopper, chinchbug and the flea.
Oh, I'll tell you of it's joys and sing of it's fame,
While starving to death on my government claim.
My Mansion is built of the natural soil,
The walls not erected according to Hoyle.
The roof has no pitch, but is level and plain.
I'll sure get wet on my government claim.
Oh, I have a good time, I live at my ease,
On canned goods, crackers, old bacon and cheese.
Then come to this country, there's room for you all,
Where the winds never cease and the rains never fall,
Where the sun never sets, but sweetly remains,
'till it burns up the crop on our government claims.
Oh, how happy I feel on my government claim!
There's nothing that will make a man hard and profane.
I've nothing to eat and nothing to wear;
The mosquitos possess both our water and air.
It's here I am settled and here I must stay;
My money's all gone and I can't get away.
There's nothing to lose and there's nothing to gain,
While starving to death on a government claim.
Hurrah for this country where blizzards arise.
Where the sun never sets and the flea never dies.
Come join in the chorus and sing of the fame,
Of the "Honyock" who's stuck on a government claim.

from the Jan. 25, 1912 issue of the Bear Paw Mountaineer

By March of 1912 the Great Northern Railroad was handling from three to six cars every day, loaded with emigrant stock destined for some point in this area. They were arriving from Iowa, Kansas, Illinois, Michigan, Ohio, the Dakotas, Wisconsin, and Minnesota. Big Sandy was attracting the largest portion, but Benton, Collins, Power and Conrad were getting their share.

It was reported that the new settlers were not of the class who came barely provided with funds for the trip to their new home but all appeared to be well supplied with provisions and food stuff, many head of livestock, a very good class of horses, and pretty well equipped with finances.

The business section on the west side of the tracks got started March 14 when John H. Cummings started construction of the Homesteaders Store and Bakery.

April 11, 1912 a two year dream came true for Big Sandy. For fully two years the desire had been brewing, stewing and smouldering within the breast of every Big Sandyite to get the Great Northern to move their depot to town.

1735881

The original Great Northern depot was located a mile and a half north of the town, near the old water tank. A horse drawn bus met all the trains and passengers getting off had a choice -- for 50c they could ride to town in the bus or they could save four bits and walk a mile and a half.

Great Northern crews loaded the depot on a flat car at night, moved it to town, unloaded and put it in place. As soon as word got around next morning a grand procession went down to see, men hatless and coatless, and women in a pretty apron brigade. They laughed and talked, gesticulated and bantered.

May 9th the second business firm opened in the Elderman addition when Lundeen Brothers General Merchandise and Hardware opened it's doors.

May 18th the 1911-12 school term ended in Big Sandy with a picnic. The merry crowd of children, accompanied by parents, were loaded on a hayrack to drive to Spring Coulee where the day was spent in playing games and partaking of a fine dinner.

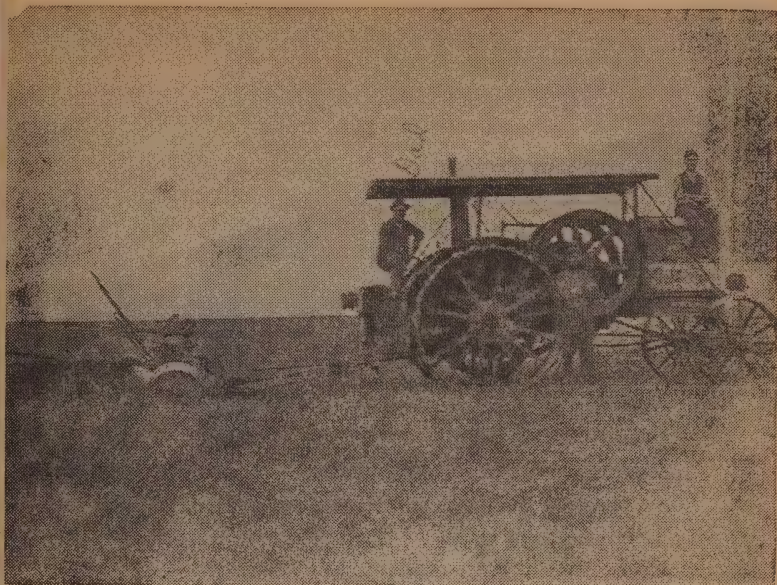


For several years a hustling Big Sandy baseball team had been meeting all comers, but June 20, 1912, they put out their first uniforms when the businessmen purchased ten new suits for the team.

Different ideas and techniques were used to break the soil. July 11, 1912 plowing with dynamite was demonstrated to residents of Big Sandy and the surrounding territory by a representative of the Dupont Powder Co.

Holes were bored, a proper amount of dynamite was placed, the charge was exploded and shattered the ground for a large radius around. The results, according to experienced farmers who witnessed the demonstration, was very gratifying. The cost of breaking ground by this method was estimated as \$18.00 an acre and it was stated it would put the ground in such condition it would never be necessary to use a deep tilling plow and a better method could not be found for conserving moisture.

The demonstration may have been gratifying but the dynamite method never became too popular.

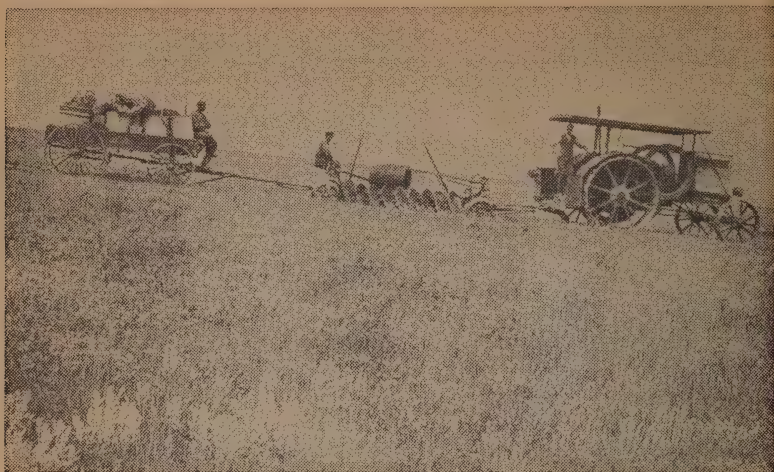


Gas and steam rigs broke up most of the soil on the vast prairies. Above is the big Titan, 30-60, the original International Tractor.

Part of the open range, where large herds of cattle used to feed, was taken over by homesteaders, anxious to forge ahead and till every available foot of soil.

Power plows were running day and night; many acres of grain were growing and many more were being prepared, more homeseekers were moving in, homestead shacks were going up all over the valley, and everyone was confident the land would provide in abundance.

Professor Thomas Shaw's book, "Dry Land Farming", 460 pages, covering every problem of dry land farming, was a best seller among the local drylanders and faithfully studied. Thousands of copies of this book were sold to Easterners who were interested in changing professions and locations and had a definite influence on the westward movement of homeseekers.



Tractor, plow and supply wagon moving on another location to break land. Note the height and density of the native grass in the foreground.



A closeup of the big Mogul used to break sod. This giant in its day broke thousands of acres of land.



By the middle of July, 1912 farmers were getting worried. With a bumper crop of grain to the acreage under cultivation ready for harvest, residents of the area were at a loss to know how they were going to get their crops threshed.

"There will be thousands of bushels of grain out our way and no one has any idea who they are going to get to 'do the work,'" one anxious farmer said.

It was hoped that someone would be on hand to help the farmers out in their dilemma, and that some of the farmers intended to purchase threshing rigs.

Several rigs were needed to complete the work on the prairie and while the crops in some instances were in comparatively small fields, the moves would not be long.

August 1, 1912 William Blonder, traveling immigrant agent for the Great Northern Railroad, announced that the next big influx of settlers would be eighteen German families from Northern Minnesota. He had located this colony in one locality in one day sixty miles from Big Sandy.

For the past year the Great Northern Railroad had, under the direct supervision of E. C. Leedy, general immigration agent, been recommending the Big Sandy area to homeseekers and assisting in every way to populate the area and to locate more and more families.



An early picture of the Mackton Coal Mine, located east of Big Sandy in the foothills. At this time coal was selling for \$3 a ton at the mine. This mine was in operation long before the homestead days and most of the ranchers and homesteaders kept their homes warm with coal from the Mackton mine.

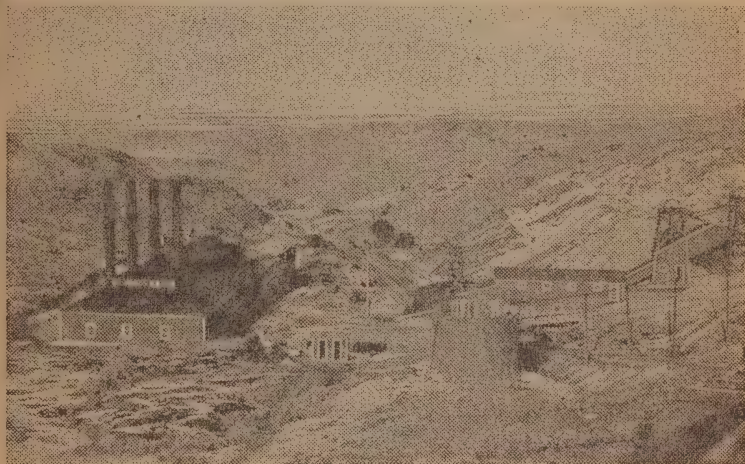
August, 1912, Big Sandy's one big industry, the Mackton Coal Mine, announced plans for further expansion of their operation by plans for eventually putting in complete electrical equipment and widening their track to standard gauge and doing away with the narrow gauge railway that was used to transport the coal five miles from the mine to the Great Northern railroad east of Big Sandy.

It was felt at this time that the Mackton Mine was in its earliest stage of full development. The miners had blocked out 150,000 tons of coal that could be put on the market as fast as it could be loaded on the cars. The coal was ship-

ped to Spokane and Seattle and other points on the west coast.

During the peak production period the mine employed quite a number of miners and most of these men had also filed on homesteads. This large payroll acted as a stabilizing influence on the economy of the area for years.

Other mines were opened throughout the area around Centennial, but as the market for coal declined they gradually closed. The unmined coal is still there and some day there may be a market for it.



A view of the Mackton mine at the height of its activity. It was the big industry in the area. This is looking north toward Box Elder, the power plant is toward the left, the mine to the right. The narrow gauge goes down the coulee in the center of the picture and was used to haul the coal to the Great Northern mainline, five miles to the left. The old roadbed can still be seen in places.

Bunkhouses and a dining hall were provided near the site for the miners. Many of the men used their wages to improve the land they had filed on and their wages were considered a valuable asset to the growing town of Big Sandy.

August 29, 1912 Hans Lehfeldt adopted a new slogan, "Big Sandy Must Grow", and commenced laying out a new townsite, Lehfeldt's Addition to Big Sandy, on the east side of the tracks.

September 5th Sandyites were warned to use judgement when they embided the amber fluid. A new cement jail was completed and ready for its first occupants. The building is still standing.



Above is the crew that built the first elevator in Big Sandy. Work was started September 28, 1912 and it was built by the Rocky Mountain Elevator Co. W. A. Shurmann was employed to have charge of the elevator when it was completed. A movement was also underway at this time to organize a Farmer's Elevator.

By September 26th Big Sandy's record was fifty carloads of household goods shipped here in the past six months, in some instances each car had the possessions of two or more families.

While this number represented the people who had used immigrant cars many times that number had purchased tickets for Big Sandy and bought their household necessities after arriving here.



Brende Brothers was one of several new buildings opened for business in Elderman's addition in 1912. Another was the Lyons Building, 24x36, two stories high, where a good size crowd turned out to witness the first exhibition of motion pictures November 23rd. It was reported that although those present were well pleased with the performance the pictures weren't too clear.

The first part of December a meeting of the ladies of Big Sandy was held and plans were made for exercises to be held Christmas night; with a program, popcorn, candy, peanuts, Santa Claus and presents. An excellent program was presented by the little folks at the Oliver Opera House.

C. T. Hansen's Store had a complete line of Xmas goods including toys, cut glass, hand painted china and silverware. McNamara and Marlow's Store had Santa Claus as their guest and carried a complete line of Xmas gifts. Lundeen Bros. were selling Christmas candies for 15c a pound and apples for \$1.50 a box.

1912 ended with a new business in the community. Frank Worstell advertised that he had a new water wagon and would deliver Mountain Water to any residence for 35c a barrel.



A posse? They couldn't be waiting for the Curry Gang, because their fondness for Great Northern express cars had terminated years before this picture was taken. Second from the right is Harry Green.

1913 opened with a party and ball at the Oliver Opera House New Year's Eve. This was the grand ball of the season and the building was decorated to represent a Japanese garden, music was furnished by Prof. F. A. Roland.

With the coming of the new year a note of optimism was felt throughout the entire area. Merchantile establishments were planning to enlarge and increase their stock to meet the growing demands and real estate dealers anticipated a large demand for land as well as city property and were looking forward to a big expansion.

January 2, 1912 the volume of mail going through the local post office had increased to the point it was changed to a post office of the third class.



Mail was carried on the mail stages from Big Sandy to Judith and Warrick. Above is a picture of the old Warrick post office and Mr. and Mrs. Smith Henderson, who operated that post office for years.

By April 10th Big Sandy was looking forward to another industry. W. A. Vanover brought in and sold the first load of Big Sandy made brooms and stated he intended to build a factory in Big Sandy.

April 17th marked another first for Big Sandy, Andy Elderman built the first cement sidewalk and it was predicted that the old wood walks would become obsolete.

Also on April 17, 1913 a large party, with immigrant cars of household goods, farm machinery, etc., arrived from Olympia, Washington to find homesteads.



1913 the plans were made to replace the old McNamara and Marlow Store with the "Big Store". Since 1888, when it was built by Broadwater, McCullen and Co., it served this community as the only store in this area until the coming of the homesteaders.



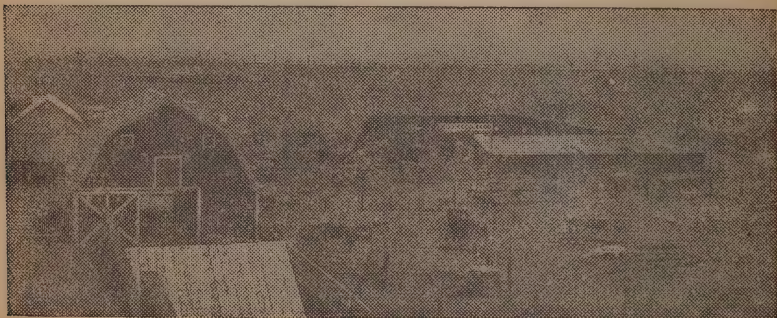
Main Street of Big Sandy on the east side of the tracks before the "Big Store" was built. The two story building on the left is the old Northern Montana State Bank, followed by the Exchange Saloon, the Wa-Hoo Saloon, and the Log Cabin Saloon. The large building to the right is the Spokane Hotel and annex.



The west side of town in 1913. This portion of Elderman's addition started out to be the business district and was developing rapidly when this picture was taken. The

large building on the left was the Lyon's Building and the building with the Rex Flour sign was the Homesteaders Store.

After the "Big Store" was built on the east side of the tracks the other business establishments gradually shifted over to the same side over a period of years and the west side became residential. All the remains of the one time high hopes for a business district on the west side is the 80 foot wide streets.



April 24, 1913 Simon Mohr started construction of his feed lot, east of the old jail. The lot had its own water well and could feed and care for 50 head of horses.

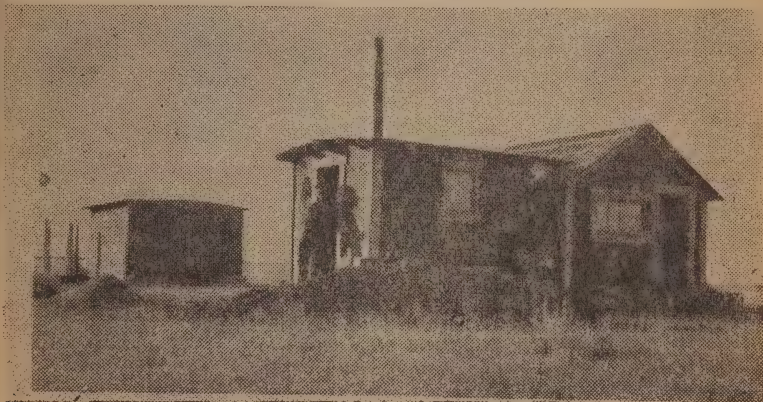
The Red Light District is at the top center of the picture. Prior to 1913 it had been located in town, but May 15, 1913 a mass meeting of the citizens, called at the insistance of their wives was held to ascertain what should be done about the district. There had been considerable agitation for some time to do something about it, as the town was gradually growing to the east and lots in the restricted area were unsaleable.

The question was quite generally debated at the meeting and it was finally decided by a majority of the citizens to have the propriator of the house in which they were located move the business over the hill about a half mile from town and place a high board fence around the property.

Even after the district was moved out of town it remained a controversial issue for years, especially after the town

was incorporated. Prospective candidates for the town council were elected or defeated on the stand they took on the issue, Republicans and Democrats were on opposing sides, Big Sandy's two newspapers, The Bear Paw Mountaineer and The Big Sandy Booster were on opposite sides. The district was a reliable source of funds for the town as old court records reveal that the women were fined \$50.00 and cost every two weeks, regularly.

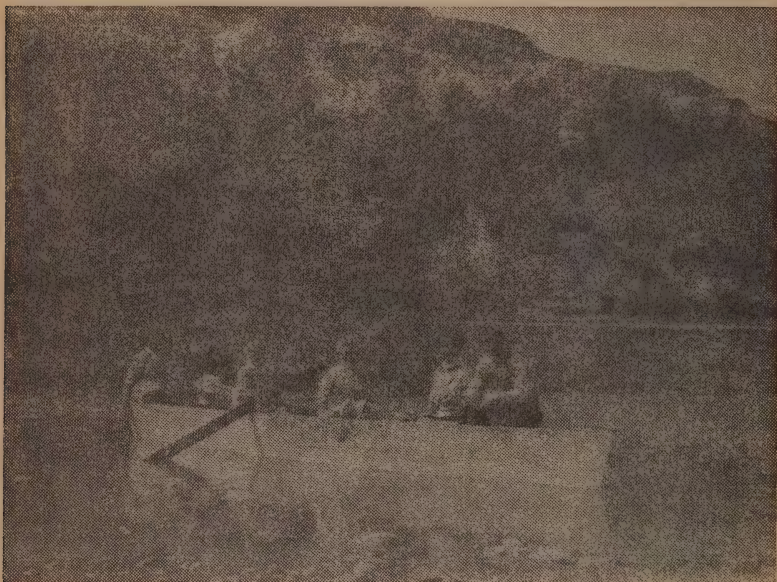
In 1913 homestead shacks were going up all over the area and the town was expanding rapidly.



Above is a set of building on one of the homesteads.

April 24th E. J. Carssow started building a pool hall. May 18th the Methodist church was started. May 22nd C. A. Butler started building a barber shop. May 29 Martin Balazic started his shoe repair shop. June 10th a new post office building was started. April 25th equipment was being moved in for a feed grinding plant. October 2nd Fred Collins started construction of a blacksmith shop and October 3rd McNamara and Marlow started building a lumber shed. November 13th William Pickell opened a photo studio. November 20th the "Big Store" opened for business and December 18th the new bank building was being completed.

Homesteaders were arriving in larger groups. May 1st forty-five families from Oregon moved in near Kenilworth and May 8th a party of 40 Bohemians from Chicago were located by Campbell and Coleman 20 miles southeast of Big Sandy.



A family outing on the Missouri River. This is an early picture taken in 1911 at the mouth of Eagle Creek.

People enjoyed considerable local outdoor recreation during the homestead days. The distance that could be covered by horses in one day was limited. It was not unusual for entire families to pack gear in a wagon and go on a weeks camping trip to the Bear Paws or along the Missouri for fishing or berry picking. Hunting was exceptionally good in the Lonesome Lake area in the early days, at one time, before the coming of the homesteader sportsmen from Great Falls and Butte had a hunting lodge on Lonesome Lake. Deer and antelope were plentiful in the mountains and southeast area and attracted numerous hunting

parties. Some combined business and pleasure by using trapping as a sideline to add to their income.



An early picture of the senic White Rocks area on the Missouri River, an attraction unchanged from the days Lewis and Clark first saw it. The trappers, the wood hawks, the cowboys paused to marvel at the wierd formations, the homesteaders used the area for a camping and picnic ground, but even today the area has been seen by very few outsiders.

Another big step forward was taken when electric lines reached Big Sandy in 1913 and electricity was available for lighting and power.

Public spirited citizens of the growing community started construction of a race track and amphitheatre June 5th on the H. I. Mudd ranch just west of the railroad. A half mile track, with a baseball diamond on the inside, was being constructed.

1500 people, the largest crowd in the history of the town prior to this, gathered at Big Sandy July 4th to celebrate the day. 250 visitors from Fort Benton arrived on the 11:15 train, three additional coaches having been annexed for their special use. There were speeches, a baseball game between Big Sandy and Fort Benton, and horse races. In the evening the crowd enjoyed fireworks and dancing. Bowerys had been constructed to accommodate the crowd.



Teams were hitched up, neighbors were gathered on the load on the way, and groups enjoyed picnics or fishing trips or gathered at one of the homesteads for parties or dancing.

July 24th 370,000 pounds of wool was sold in one day at Big Sandy; by September 18th 200 cars of grain had been shipped out; and by October 23rd the big roundup of cattle in the Bear Paws was completed and two train loads were trailed in, loaded and shipped.

Sunday, December 20th, a dedication service was held at the partially completed Methodist Church, with Rev. Roy Nelson delivering the address. The previous Saturday the Methodist Ladies Aid cleared \$110 at a bazaar at the Oliver Opera House, followed by a box supper.



Slow but reliable, a team of oxen used for motive power. This picture was taken about 1911, near where the Roy Pegar ranch is now.

1913 Christmas shoppers were offered a variety of merchandise to choose from. The Wa-Hoo had Bond, Lillard, Bourbon, and Monogram Rye and Imported and Domestic Wines. At Lundeen Brothers a Royal customed tailored suit for men could be purchased for as little as \$16 and there was a choice of silverware, aluminum, fancy china, leather goods, gloves, mittens, neckties, suspenders, dolls, toys and books. Brende Brothers offered fine Norway pine skis, hand sleighs, Winslow skates, cast aluminum ware, crockery, electric supplies, domes and portables, and gas and kerosene parlor lamps. The Big Sandy Garage, J. E. Miller, prop., was taking orders for Fords, the universal car. Alex Hersh had a full line of jewelry and clocks. Mrs. F. W. Collins was selling finished and unfinished embroid-

ery work, kimonas, dressing sacques, house dresses, and pantaloon skirts. McNamara and Marlow's Store had dolls, doll carts, pianos, dishes, sleds, rocking horses, spinning wheels, guns, drums, rubber balls, Xmas tree trimmings, bells, Xmas candles, and fancy Xmas boxes. C. T. Hanson offered toys, shoes, overshoes, mittens, and outing flannels. At the City Studio the customers received one photo free with each dozen.



A typical example of an early day homestead and the hope and ambition for a better life. Note the wide open spaces on all sides.

In 1914 Big Sandy promoters adopted the slogan, "1500 population by 1917".

The new year opened with a public grand ball and banquet put on by the Masons, aided by the Eastern Star. Two floors were used for dancing, Lyon's Hall and Lyon's Opera House. Supper and refreshments, with ticket, cost \$1.50, ladies free. Over 250 persons attended the festivities.

January 22, 1914 Wiley and Elliott opened their grocery store.

In 1914 Big Sandy had two banks; Northern Montana State Bank, assets \$237,817.74, E. B. Newhall cashier; and the Security State Bank, assets \$26,479.57, F. S. Miller cashier.

February 3, 1914, The City Hospital opened. It was built by Dr. Gaylord Worstell, half a block east of the present Mountaineer building. The hospital had a kitchen, operating room, bath room, and room for fifteen patients.

March 18th Big Sandy petitioned for its seventh saloon, which was turned down by the commissioners.

Homeseekers and settlers were arriving continually, March 19 five immigrant cars unloaded in one day at Big Sandy and the population was increasing almost daily.

March 26th progress eliminated an old landmark when the Log Cabin Saloon was moved to make room for a new building.

In April nearly every train brought one or more parties looking for land and the rush appeared to be even greater than it was in 1913.

The April 16th issue of the Bear Paw Mountaineer was filled with ninety-five Homestead Entry Notices and four Notices of Contest.

People also died in the new land they had adopted and April 30th additional land was acquired to enlarge the cemetery on the hill west of town.

Changes were coming rapidly in the little town of Big Sandy in May of 1914. Railroad crews started to tear down the original stockyard, a crossing was put in at the depot, the new Wolverine Hotel, built by George Hofsommer, opened it's 20 rooms for business, and on May 21st the the basement was started for the new Catholic Church.

May 14th the population of Big Sandy was counted and the census taken found 199 men, women and children living in town.

The Eagleton area was becoming populated and May 21, 1914 a postoffice was established with Miss Hawkins as the postmistress and the same week work was started on a schoolhouse for that area.



Another early day school was the old Lohse School, located near the Judith Crossing. Facilities were often crude, but served the purpose they were intended for. Most children in the rural areas had to travel varying distances to reach the school by horse and buggy or saddle horse and a horse barn could be found at most of the schools.

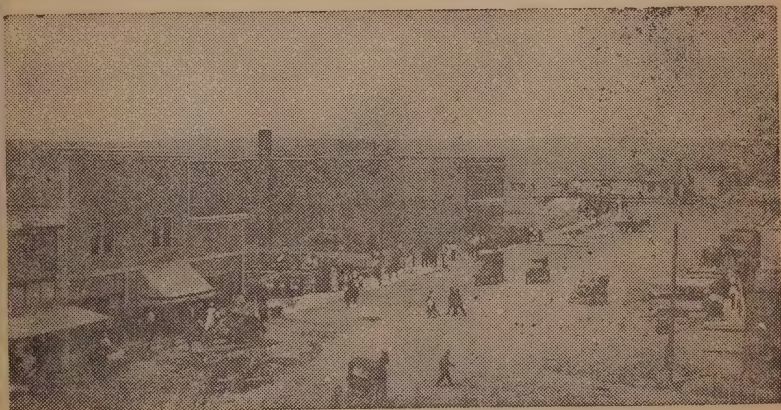
May, 1914 plans were being made for a Marias Irrigation Project. D. C. Henny, government reclamation supervising engineer from Oregon, went over the proposed project from Big Sandy to the Marias River and thought that the plan was feasible.

The annual wool sale was held June 25th and 500,000 pounds sold at an average price of 17c a pound.

June 25, 1914 construction started on Big Sandy's second elevator, built by the H. Earl Clack Co.

July 4th, 1914 over 2,000 people gathered at Big Sandy from near and far to help celebrate. Great Northern Railroad put on a special rate for any passengers within a radius of 200 miles.

An all day and all night program was held to entertain the large crowd. Music by the Big Sandy Band started the day off at 9:30, there was a fancy roping exhibition on Main Street at 10:30, and then more music by the band at the fair grounds.



Main Street, Big Sandy, July 4th, 1914



Horse races at Big Sandy July 4, 1914



Part of the crowd at the Big Sandy fair grounds

A big program was held at the fair grounds including 3-4 mile horse race, 3-8 mile pony race, 1-2 mile horse race, 1-4 mile free for all, consolation race, bull-dogging, motor-cycle race, ball game, roping contest, broncho riding, bare-back steer and mule riding.

Other contests included 100 yard dash, running broad jump, three-legged race, wheelbarrow race, sack race, and weiner eating contest.

There was fire works in the evening and dancing at the Oliver Opera House, Masonic Hall and at the boweries.

By July 23rd fourteen car loads of new machinery had been unloaded at Big Sandy including harvesters, headers, small tractors, plows, etc. It was estimated that the land in crops in 1914 was almost double that of 1913 in the Big Sandy area and the rural population had grown in proportion and there seemed to be no end to the new settlers.



July 23rd the bond election for the new \$22,000 schoolhouse carried 147 to 15. The site was picked previous to this on May 28th when property owners voted 256 to 154 to locate the new school in the Riney Addition instead of the old site one block south of the Big Store. Both sites were offered to the school board for \$1. Construction on the new building started September 24th.

As the country settled more post offices were established. By July 30th Big Sandy was sending mail to six different post offices - Warrick, Judith, Hopp, Eagleton, Kenilworth and Verona. A post office was established at Iliad October 22nd.

October 15, 1914 a train load of cattle, consisting of over 40 cars, was shipped out of Big Sandy for the Chicago market, marking the wind-up of the years roundup in this vicinity. A special coach was furnished with the train for the use of shippers who accompanied the cattle.

There was a drastic change that year. The roundup of

1914 lacked the scene, the color and the celebration that had been part of the roundup in years gone by when train load after trainload were sent out of Big Sandy, and herd after herd of cattle were held in the adjoining country waiting to be loaded; when large numbers of cowboys came in with the herds and enjoyed getting in off the range in sight of people, trains, hotels, and amusement places, and put on a riotous celebration and took over the town.

But this year there was a big difference. The homesteader outnumbered the cowboy. The old stock yard had been dismantled, to make room for an elevator, and a much smaller stockyard built. The cowboys came in, but they were few. They brought the cattle, loaded them, got on their horses and returned to their ranches to build fence, take care of the grain and hay and the younger cattle.

Shipping day, 1914, was not the holiday in Big Sandy that it had been in years gone by.



Even the coming of cold weather did not halt the progress and development of Big Sandy. December 3, 1914 the power company started to install street light and another phase of its existance passed into history, dark and unlighted streets.



Another chore people were confronted with each winter --putting up ice. This was long before the day of the refrigerator and deep freeze and to keep perishable produce from spoiling during the summer months ice had to be harvested during the winter. Chunks of ice were cut on a lake, river or reservoir, hauled in to an ice house, and packed in saw dust.

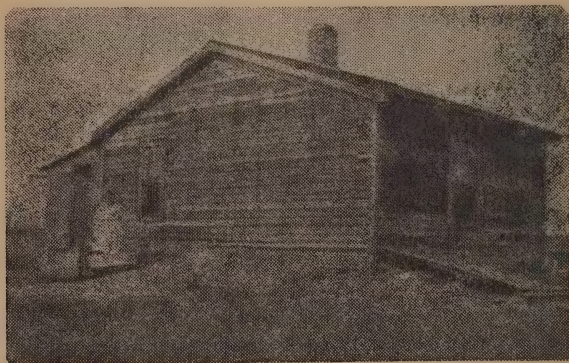
53 business and professional men of Big Sandy extended Seasons Greetings to the population in the 1914 Christmas issue of the Bear Paw Mountaineer. They were:

Wiley and Elliott; Orpheum Theatre; McNamara and Marlow; A. G. Waite, Lawyer; Collins Blacksmith Shop; Wah-Hoo, George Stevens, prop.; J. C. Knight, Well Driller; New Grand Opera House, R. S. Tingley; Mahood and Myers Garage; Bear Paw Cafe, C. H. Kono, prop.; Lundeen Brothers; B. S. Meat Market, P. H. Schwartz; C. T. Hansen Store; City Butcher Shop, Harry Brassington, prop.; The Paris Hat Shop, Mrs. F. W. Collins; B. S. Tailor Shop, B. D. Harmon; Hugh O. Schrammeck, real estate; G. D. Eckart, real estate; Martin Balazic, shoe shop.

Emery D. Harnden, attorney; City Hospital, Dr. Worstell; Dr. C. L. McLellan; C. N. Alkire, veterinarian; Mon-

tana Hotel, G. Hokanson; John Ulin, contractor; John Norden, draying; Sidney Smith, auto livery; Hiram Day, blacksmith; St. Anthony and Dakota Lumber Co.; White Barber Shop; Northern Montana State Bank; H. H. Lehfeldt, real estate; Bear Paw Mountaineer; Big Sandy Harness Shop, C. R. Wall; Big Sandy Saloon; Eal Eck Bar, Eckhart and O'Neil; Big Sandy Cafe, George Shikato and Tom Matsumato; Mack Mine, Bert Mack.

Brende Brothers Hardware; Security State Bank; Campbell Land Co., George Campbell; Frank R. Ryan, dry goods; City Bakery Shop, Henry Mitchell; Big Sandy Feed Store, Seacoy and Beck; Wolverine Hotel, G. A. Hofsommer; Carssows Pool Hall; Exchange Saloon and Spokane Hotel, C. B. VanAlstine; Pioneer Livery, R. S. Tingley; Alex Herch, jewelry; Oliver Opera House; the Farmers Restaurant, and the Empire Lumber Co.



Another early homestead. This is Mrs. Joseph Hurst and her home in Sheep Coulee in 1914.

1915 people were still looking for land and the home-seekers came in model T Fords, little Maxwells, by motorcycle, by train, and in immigrant cars.

January 14, 1915 the west side of Big Sandy was disturbed by a wandering bear.

January 14 Dr. McLellan, foreseeing the need for a maternity hospital, opened a hospital in the house east of the Murtaugh residence, with Mrs. Emma Gallagher as matron.

January 16th 500 people attended the opening of Big Sandy's new schoolhouse. A dance was given by the school board members to pay for a new piano for the school and supper was served by the ladies of the district.

January 28 the new game of basketball reached Big Sandy and a group of young men rented the Oliver Opera House to start playing the new sport.

February 1st the first rural mail route was established here and went to Kenilworth.

March 4th the commissioners accepted an official census count of 500 as the first step toward incorporating Big Sandy.

March 11th Mrs. Emma Morrison and son were moving in machinery to start a laundry in their new building on the east end of Main Street.

April 16, 1914 Big Sandy was incorporated by a vote of 71 to 45. Lady voters turned out in good number and the credit for carrying the election was largely due to their efforts.

May 13th O. Stainhofer opened a tin shop in the Lyons block.

June 10th W. A. Bowman started installing a local telephone system with an estimated 75 to 100 phones.

June 24th R. S. Tingley opened his Grand Opera House, the rebuilt former Pioneer Livery. The program consisted of a photo drama (movies); and Mrs. Henry Schwartz, the Montana soprano, rendered several choice solos, accompanied by Prof. Roland.

July 8th Big Sandy's third elevator, built by the Farmers Produce Co., was nearly completed and ready to open for business.

July 10, 1915 the first town election was held and Samuel

Miller was elected mayor; and E. J. Carssow, C. B. Van-Alstine, Dr. Worstell, and Dr. McLellan were elected councilmen. The first meeting of the new council was held July 26th and H. H. Lehfeldt was appointed clerk and P. B. McClintock was appointed treasurer. Plans were made to pass some town ordinances and purchase the street lights from the Big Sandy Commercial Club.

August 12th the harvest was ending in this area with reports of 35 to 45 bushel wheat.



In 1915 the Bear Paw Mountains were a favorite spot for picnics, outings or a Sunday drive. More and more people were using automobiles to travel, but considering the conditions of the roads and the quality of the automobiles, a Sunday drive in the mountains could become a very large adventure before the family arrived home again. Above is a view of Old Baldy.



The Missouri River badlands was another favorite out-
ing spot in 1915, although roads were very inadequate and
the area was hard to reach by automobile. The above view
was taken in the White Rocks area.

In August, 1915 Big Sandy made national news again
when the following promotional story made a number of
the daily papers:

"Big Sandy, the town on the Great Northern Railway,
between Fort Benton and Havre, is one of the most pros-
perous agricultural towns in America.

Big Sandy is a good town, surrounded by a rich country,
especially the west bench. This bench is 35 miles wide and
about 40 miles long. The Sweet Grass hills along the Can-
adian line 85 miles away can be seen as plain as day. It was
about four years ago that settlers started to come to this
bench, and at the present time every quarter section of
land has been taken up, and 75 percent of each quarter is
under cultivation. There are buildings on nearly every
quarter section, and many of the homes are surrounded
with beautiful groves.



The old Exchange Saloon about 1915. It was located on Main Street near the bank building.

The grain on nearly all of the farms is already cut, in shocks, or in stack, and several threshing outfits are now operating.

Fields of oats are seven feet high. Farmers estimate that the wheat lands will produce all the way from 35 to 45 bushels an acre; and the yield of oats and flax will also be exceptionally good. There are also many beautiful corn fields on this bench.

Every farm is splendidly fenced and the roads are ideal.

And southeast of Big Sandy, in the Bear Paw mountains is also superior farming land, and the yield of oats, wheat and flax, and also hay in this section, will be exceedingly good; perhaps better than on the bench.

Big Sandy is a prosperous town, with a population of around 700. It has wide streets, is splendidly lighted, and provided with cement walks in many sections. The town has three splendid hotels, two banks, several lumber yards, and one exceptionally good merchandise store. The town has a good cafe, two newspapers, two billard halls, four saloons, and an up-to-date clothes cleaning establishment. In the residential section there are many beautiful bungalow homes.

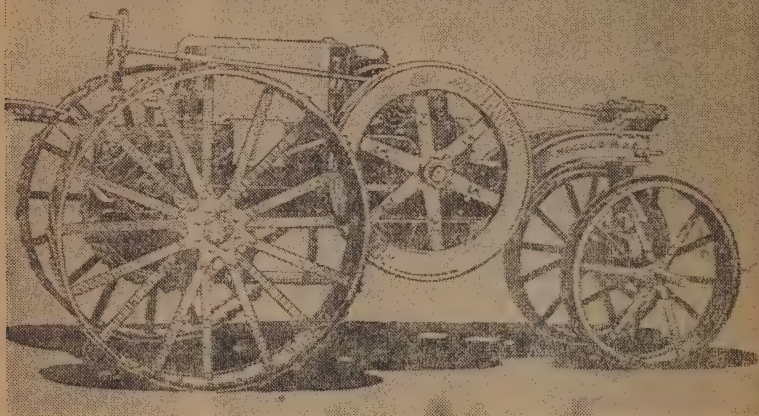
Big Sandy presents a busier appearance than most farming towns; due to the fact farmers are going in and out all the time with grain, lumber, etc. Big Sandy will be a town of 5,000 population in less than ten years."

After reading the above publicity and the wonders of the Big Sandy country another great trek of homeseekers were encouraged to try their luck on the great wastelands of the northern plains, not realizing that it would take a tough man to conquer a tough land. The newcomers came from all over, but they came -- to Big Sandy.

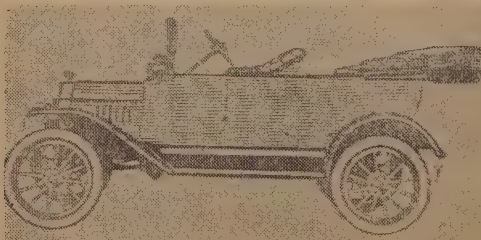


One of Big Sandy's leading citizens in the early days was Barney VanAlstine on the right. In the background is the back of the Big Store on the left and the back of the Spokane Hotel on the right.

INTERNATIONAL HARVESTER MACHINES



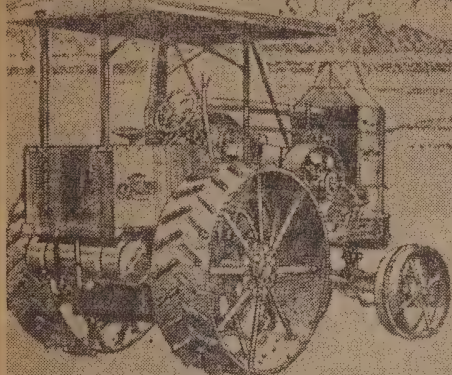
The small farm tractor for all farm work. Which is the best - to wear out a good team in a day's work of shallow plowing, or to use up 20 gallons of unfeeling kerosene and plow as deep as you want. Get a Mogul 8-16 from McNamara and Marlow, only \$675.00.



The Ford - a simple car of proven quality. A car anyone can operate, anyone can care for, and a car that brings satisfaction to everyone. \$440.00 at the M and M Garage.

RUMELY

Power Farming Machinery



Right on Your Own Farm

The OilPull Tractor will cut the drudgery of farm

work and reduce farm costs, for the simple reason that the OilPull is a year 'round proposition. It saves money plowing, harvesting, threshing, hauling, drilling and at other power jobs.

15-30 and 30-60. Burns cheap kerosene or distillate at all loads, any kind of work. Arne Beck, agent.

C. T. Hansen Implements was selling the BIG BULL tractor. It would do any kind of work at a small cost. The highest point of efficiency ever attained in tractioneering. Let us demonstrate it for you. Get in the habit of calling to see the "The Bull with the Pull". It has proven its worth in breaking sod, discing, seeding and pulling the binder.

"The Biggest Little Tractor on the Prairie", is the unanimous verdict of everyone of our customers who have seen the famous 12-25 CASE Tractor turning sod on Mr. A. Simonsen's farm. A splendid piece of machinery, perfect in detail, in a class by itself. Brende Brothers.

Compare an AVERY Tractor with any other. The simplest tractor built - no cooling fan, no fuel pump, no water pump, no clockwork lubricator. R. S. Kiltz, agent.

FIGURE SUPERIORITY

Your figure portrays your personality - and your corset makes your figure.

An erect bearing, graceful poise and a general air of figure trimness mark the woman of superior personality. She realizes she must have corset comfort, the very least dissatisfaction unsettles her ease of mind.

She wants her gowns as they should be worn and every line correct, and every drape falls where it should. She knows that her corset is the secret of this, and she therefore selects her corset with care.

Warner's Rust - Proof Corsets at McNamara and Marlow's Store.

September 5, 1915 the first all women jury in the history of the town served on a case tried before Justice of Peace W. A. Schurmann. The jury was composed of eight prominent Big Sandy lady voters.

September 16 the new town council started to enforce some of their new ordinances. Dog owners had until October 1st to purchase a license for their canines. The new town pound was put into use as it became illegal to feed livestock in the streets. The first week several porkers and cows were taken into custody and impounded and their owners fined; Marshal Holland carrying out the orders of the council.

October 14th sixteen carloads of cattle were shipped out to South St. Paul.





The interior of one of the saloons at Big Sandy during the homestead days.

October 21st a petition was being circulated to move the post office into the new building next to the bank.

The markets report for December, 1915 listed hard spring wheat 98c, No. 1 winter wheat 97c, Durum wheat 93c, and flax \$1.90 a bushel.

The cost of living was down in proportion: silk hosiery 50c, pajamas 1.75, night shirts 1.00, shirts 60c, union suits 1.25, hats 1.50, caps 75c, all wool suits 15.00, suspenders 35c, garters 25c, arm bands 10c, high button work shoes 3.00, Kodaks 1.00, Victrolas 15.00, sewing machines 45.00.

Corn, beans, peas and kraut, 2 cans for 25c; peaches, pears and apricots 25c a can; coffee 35c a pound, hair cuts 35c.

The new Maxwell with dismountable rims, electric star-

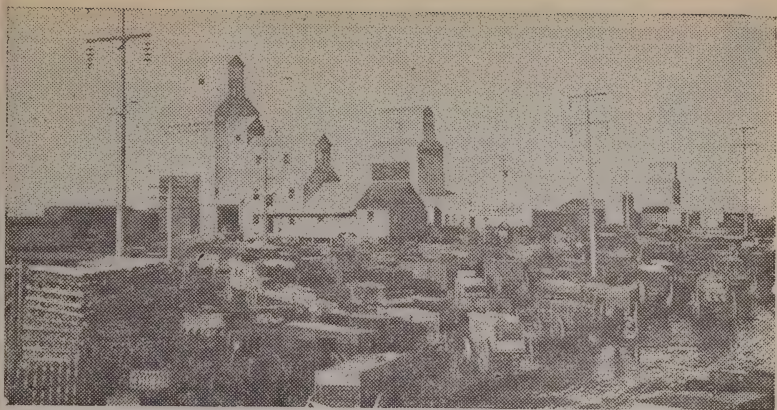


A group of homesteaders in front of the Big Sandy depot.

ter, electric lights and magneto ignition was selling for \$655.00. The Overland 83 was costing \$750.00. The Ford car had a choice of prices; the runabout was selling for \$390.00, the touring car \$440.00, and the town car was costing \$640.00.

December, 1915 Big Sandy planned to go all out for the Christmas season. The ladies of the Royal Neighbor Lodge formed a committee of one to see that all preparations were made and a municipal Christmas tree provided, with due exercises being held Christmas night in front of the old postoffice. They collected money, candy, nuts and other necessities to make the event a success.

The stores and business places of Big Sandy took much pride in their Christmas decorating and their shelves were heavily laden with the good things of the Christmas tide.



In 1916 the homesteader, farming a 160 acre or 320 acre unit, reached the peak of his prosperity in the Big Sandy area, both as an individual and as a community. Crops were good and the price of wheat was high.

The above picture gained nation wide fame and furnished undisputed evidence of the tremendous crop that was harvested that fall. When this picture was taken November 16, 1916 two hundred and eighty-six wagons were waiting to unload at the Big Sandy elevators, with wheat selling for \$1.84 per bushel. Elevator operators used numbered tickets to keep the loads in line and the town was unable to provide shelter for all the men and teams.

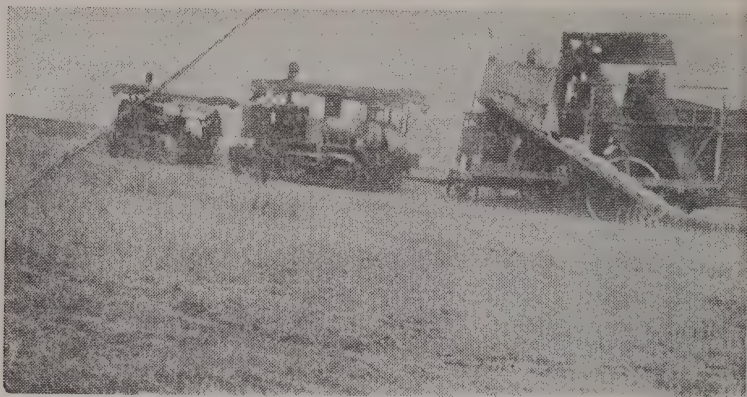
A flour mill was also operating at Big Sandy in 1916.

Hopes for the future were high in 1916 and the building boom continued. C. B. VanAlstine started the new year by building a 15x80 foot addition to the Spokane Hotel.

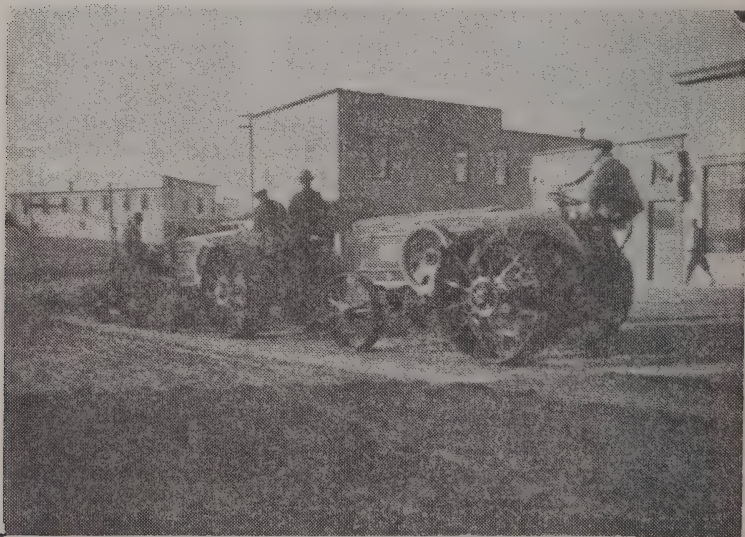
January 6th the Lohse Brothers brought in a wagon load of alfalfa seed and sold it for \$813.00.

January 13th another new business was established when William Vanover installed new equipment for the weaving of carpets.

The winter of 1916 was very severe with the temperature down as low as 62 degrees below zero. In January two people froze to death in the area, one man eighteen from Big Sandy and one in the Warrick country, and several others were frozen so badly they were hospitalized.



A Best Catipiller pulling a Holt Combine



Brende Brothers Hardware moving some Case 12-25 tractors to their location on the west side of the tracks. The Case was advertised as producing 33 percent more drawbar pull and 36 percent more points than its closest competitor.

As spring approached optimism was high. Prospects for a bumper crop the coming season was brighter than ever and the merchants and farmers generally were looking forward to a big and prosperous year. The tractor salesmen were getting busy early and getting in a sufficient supply of stock to handle the trade.



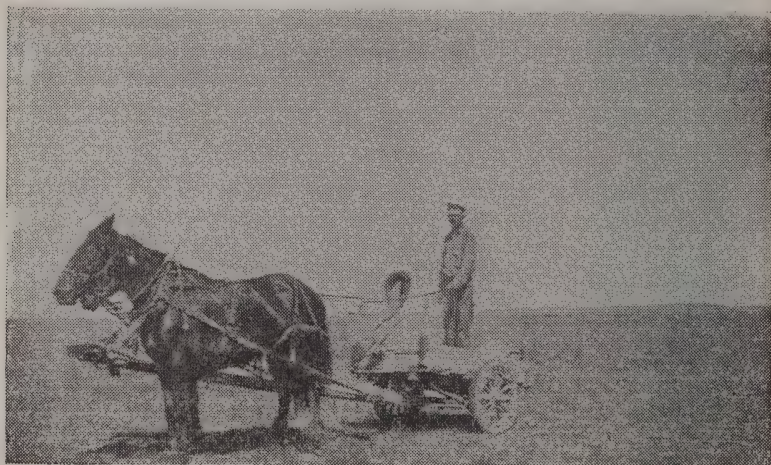
A ranch in the foothills of the Bear Paw Mountains.

Although the big emphasis was on the homesteader and the wheat farm during this period the cattleman and sheepman was still very much a part of this community. Cattle, horses and sheep continued to be a large factor in the economy of the area, especially in the mountains and along the Missouri River. Most homesteaders also raised some livestock during this period.

In 1916 Montana was first in United States in sheep products. As the land became settled sheep in smaller bands in fenced pastures became more numerous. A farmer could buy 16 sheep for \$50 and in one year sell the wool and the lambs for \$89.60.



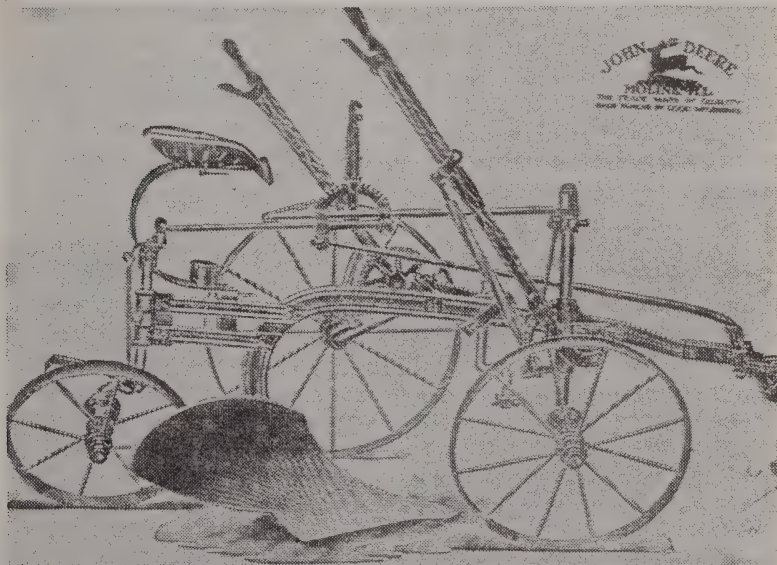
Breaking a horse. This picture was taken at the old Fred Peterson homestead in 8 Mile Coulee. Lester Sluggett is second from the left, Wallace Hoge aboard the horse, and Elmer Lidstone on the right.



Carl Krumsick and the Iliad to Kabo mail stage. He also from time to time hauled passengers.

In 1917 the dreams, the hopes, and the ambitions of the small dryland farmer started to crack a little, although few would admit it. Hopes for hundreds of little empires faded slightly. 1910 to 1916 were good years. It rained when the moisture was needed and World War I sent the price of wheat up to \$2.00 a bushel and everyone expected it to go up to \$4.00 a bushel in 1917.

The homesteaders were urged to grow more wheat and to produce more meat and wool for the war effort. They were encouraged to borrow money to buy more land, to buy equipment, to expand. The banks, the land companies, and the real estate firms were all eager to loan the home-



The John Deere Stag Sulkey, the frameless plow. It will handle the soil under the most difficult conditions and is adapted to work successfully under more varying conditions than any other wheel plow on the market. See this plow at McNamara and Marlow.

steadier money for 10 percent, money that they had borrowed at 6 percent.

Most people didn't realize a change was starting in 1917. The grasshoppers returned and there was some hail and drought. The drought didn't come all at once or in all places at the same time -- but it came slowly.

In 1916 this area got 15.26 inches of rain, in 1917 it dropped to 9.96 inches.

The economy of the area was retarded just a little, but everyone had high hopes they would make it up and more the following year.

In 1917 confidence in the future of the area was greater than ever. That year plans were completed, an election held, bonds were sold, and the Town of Big Sandy was ready to put in a water and sewer system.

January 8, 1917 an election was held to extend the legal limit of indebitness and issue bonds to raise \$16,800 for water and \$12,500 for sewer. The issue passed 53 to 1. Ward 1 voted: yes 38, no 0; Ward 2 voted: yes 21, no 1. The bonds were sold to the Minnesota Loan and Trust Co. at 6



A neighborhood gathering of homesteaders at the Earl Morfield place near Five Corners.

percent interest.

It took the balance of the year to complete plans for the system and it was December 27th before the work of setting up the six special improvement districts for water mains and sewer lines was completed.

The cost of the lines and mains was \$75,806.32, broken down into the six individual districts as: District No. 1 \$30,511.04, Dist. No. 2 \$21,456.41, Dist. No. 3 \$15,523.28, Dist. No. 4 \$1,632.31, Dist. No. 5 \$4,702.45, and Dist. No. 6 \$1,980.83.

The cost of the Big Sandy water and sewer system and mains and lines was never paid off in full. Drought and wind broke the country and payments became hopelessly delinquent. Later some of the bonds were paid off at 10 to 50 percent on the dollar. The debt eventually expired due to



Breaking sod with a John Deere plow. This picture was taken on the Paul Green farm.

the statutes of limitation, and in the late 40s the remaining unpaid bonds were taken off the books.

In 1917 the people had faith in themselves, the country and the community. This confidence provided Big Sandy with a water and sewer system. If this phase of development had been delayed for several years it would have been almost impossible to promote during the dry years. Without this water and sewer system Big Sandy might not have remained in existence.



The Art Lohse threshing machine. Left to right: Carl Krumsick, Art Lohse, John Lohse and Lou Leslie.

In 1918 the economy of the homesteaders was hurt. The drought brought a crop failure. Only 8.8 inches of rain fell the entire year.

By September of 1918 local farmers were making applications for federal aid to get seed.

The farmers were still urged and encouraged to borrow more money to operate more efficiently, and a number of them bought the new harvester-threshers selling for \$1500 to \$2000. Where it had taken 15 men and 14 horses to harvest and thresh 25 acres they could now do the same work with 2 combines, 2 men and 2 trucks.

Failure of grain crops was paired with high feed prices and shortage of range for livestock. Many herds were sold at reduced prices.



McNamara and Marlow Implement Co. in 1918. The buildings, now torn down, were located between the bank and the railroad track.

The three Big Sandy banks, Northern Montana State Bank, The Security State Bank, and the Farmers National Bank of Big Sandy, were still loaning money on real estate and prospective crops. The Big Sandy Townsite Loan and Realty Co. advertised that they had just received another \$100,000 to loan on real estate.

The economy may have dropped a bit but Big Sandy was going all out for the war effort in 1918. Many local men were serving in the armed forces. The women Red Cross workers were well organized, meeting regularly, and working in all areas of the community. October 3rd the Fourth Liberty Loan went way over the top in Big Sandy when the community raised \$22,250.00.

December 12, 1918 the following Big Sandy business



The west side of the tracks in 1918. There were more business structures then and less houses. Most farmers and ranchers lived on their places in 1918 instead of moving to town. Many of the buildings in this picture have disappeared, although some are still here and others have been rebuilt and remodeled. The five elevators and the flour mill

firms donating a full page ad urging everyone to join the Red Cross: Northern Montana State Bank, Farmers National Bank, M and M Garage, Neil McMillan, E. J. Carssow, D. Stainhofer, Asol's Drug Store, Security State Bank, Big Sandy Cooperative Mercantile Assn., J. R. Callison, C. T. Hanson, Smith's Garage, Big Sandy Bakery, Mike's Place, Brende Brothers, McNamara and Marlow, and W. G. Moore.

In September there was a demand for hogs. The Big Sandy Meat Market needed 25 dressed hogs every week, weighing dressed from 100 to 200 pounds.

October 3, 1918 it was reported that the beginning of the end of old John Barleycorn made his appearance in Big Sandy with the closing of the Kentucky Club Saloon, across the street from the Asol Drug Store.



shown in the picture have all burned down and the elevators have been rebuilt. The large building in the center is the Lyons building. The water tank in the foreground was completed in 1918 and furnished the water for the town. The two story building with the large porch in the left center of the picture was the boys and girls dorm.



A view of the beautiful Bear Paw Mountains



An impromptu band during the homestead days. This picture was taken in the Eagleton area.

1919 was the year that broke many of the homesteaders and left the country destitute. June was the driest month in the recorded history of the State of Montana, and only 8.85 inches of rain fell the entire year.

With the drought came wind, and with the wind came total disaster. From 1910 to 1916 the average wheat yield in the state of Montana was 25 bushels to the acre, in 1919 the average was 2.4 bushels, and many Big Sandy homesteads were below the state average.

Morning after morning, in the summer of 1919, the sun rose clear and hot. Day after day the homesteaders watched the sky and prayed for rain. Day after day they saw thunderheads form in the late afternoon and race past without raining.

When harvest started some of the fields didn't pay for the seed that had gone in the ground.

Desperate stockmen were forced to ship in hay to feed their cattle and found that speculators had started dealing



Time out for a little fun during branding and dehorning on the George Fleming homestead. Left to right Luther Bain, Wallace Hoge, Roy Wilson, Carl Krumsick, Al, Cal and Claude Johnson.

in hay and by midwinter had forced the price up to \$50 a ton for inferior hay.

March 6, 1919 S. A. Miller resigned as mayor of Big Sandy and E. J. Carssow was appointed to replace him.

March 22nd the Big Sandy Commercial Club and the Women's Club held a big Military Ball in the Tingley Hall for returning soldiers and sailors.

April 27th H. Earl Clack began building an oil station.

July 24th the Farmers Cooperative Store moved and opened for business in the building formerly occupied by the Kentucky Club Saloon and the tailor shop. After this move the business houses of Big Sandy, with but few exceptions, were now located on the east side of the railroad track in what was formerly referred to as "old town".

July 3rd a fire siren was installed to add fire protection to the town.

In the last part of 1919 a series of meetings were held in



The east side of Big Sandy in 1918. The area on the left hand side, from the bank to the Grand Theatre has been completely replaced with new buildings. Some of the old

a desperate attempt to get the government started on the Marias irrigation project. Ironically, when the farmers wanted the project very badly the government wasn't interested; and by the time the government got around to build Tiber Dam the farmers were no longer interested.

The great exodus of homesteaders out of this area started in 1919. Crop failures had made some families destitute and some farmers were bankrupt.

They left for industrial centers to find jobs or went back to the states they originally came from. They left by train or piled their household goods in rickety cars or used a team and wagon to leave the country. Occasionally a family had to stop in town to ask a storekeeper for food, feed or gasoline to continue their journey.

Many stayed to try another year. Many of the men migrated to distant cities to find work during the winter months to finance the cost of putting in another crop.



buildings burned down and some were torn down. The area on the right, from the Big Store to the Big Sandy Meat Market has been filled in by the Vet's Club and A and P.

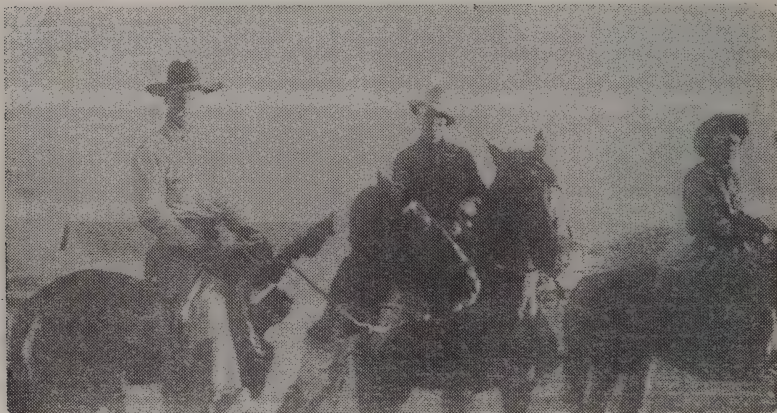
1920 started out on an optimistic note. It rained that spring and hopes returned. The drought was broken, they would get a crop.

Then the winds came; first the drought, then the wind; and no grass to hold the soil.

Day after day the "dusters" blew and whipped the fields and the hopes into the sky and blew the \$3.50 a bushel seed out of the ground. Mothers covered the faces of their children with damp cloths so they could breath, and farmers were stunned by the destruction of their crops. More destitute families were unable to continue and left the area.

1921 was another year, another chance, another opportunity for a crop. Many of those who were left were forced to borrow money again; from the government seed loan fund, from the banks, and from other sources. Wheat stem maggots, grasshoppers and Mormon crickets, combined with another year of drought forced more bankruptcies and more people out of the area.

The ones stubborn enough and tough enough to stick it out and fight the elements were getting fewer and fewer



Al Johnson, Ray Hamilton and Pat McCrea, taken at the PN Ranch.

each year.

Desperate farmers who could still borrow, still had faith in the land, still continued to put in crops, and still waited for rain. Between 1919 and 1925 there were over 20,000 foreclosures in the state. Over half the land in the county was seized by creditors.

Two other factors helped hasten the end of the small farmer during this period, a drop in market prices and the closing of banks and credit.

The price of wheat dropped from \$2.34 a bushel in 1919 to 92c in 1922. Cattle dropped from \$9.92 per hundred pounds in 1919 to \$5.42 in 1921. Sheep went down from \$9.92 per hundred pounds in 1919 to \$4.49 in 1921 and wool dropped from 58c to 19c a pound during this period.

The Federal Reserve Bank, in order to arrest the credit expansion of the war years, raised the re-discount rate and forced the reduction of loans. One hundred and fifty banks failed in Montana during this period. Northern Montana



Lossen Johnson carrying the mail from Iliad to Kabo. Others in the picture, which was taken at the King home, are Gene Willis, Walter King, Ruby King, Mrs. Rapp and Grandma and Grandpa King.

State Bank at Big Sandy was the only bank left open in the county.

This marked the end of an era in the Big Sandy community -- the sod buster, the homestead shack, and the hopes of the small dry land farmer.

It forced in bigger units and new methods of farming. During the period 1920-1928 there was considerable consolidation of ownership, farms and ranches became larger, from an average of 586 acres in 1920 to 1,940 acres in 1950. Summer fallow became an accepted practice to conserve moisture and strip farming became commonplace to eliminate blowing, and mechanization on large acreage increased to eliminate labor.

This area reached it's peak in population and farming units in 1919. Since then the population has been cut in half and the size of farms increased so two-thirds of the units operated in 1919 have been eliminated. The homestead days emerged and reached their peak with the support of weather and demand and terminated during a period of drought, falling prices, and curtailed credit.

With larger acreage, improved weather conditions, and new methods of farming this area reached a peak year again in wheat production in 1928; but many, many of the original homesteaders were no longer here to benefit from the 1928 crop.



